

· LATEST ·  
· INTERPRETATIONS ·

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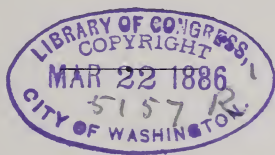




# LATEST INTERPRETATIONS,

— BY —

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REV. S. A. GARDNER.



BOSTON:  
UNIVERSALIST PUBLISHING HOUSE.

1886

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MILFORD:  
G. M. BILLINGS, PRINTER.  
1886.

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RATIONALISM.



## RATIONALISM.

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Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord

—Isaiah i: 18.

Can Rationalism furnish a complete system of religion? We might as well ask, Can a strip of land supply food enough for a human being? Of course much depends on the length and breadth of the strip and on the manner of its cultivation. If one means by Rationalism the system, or want of system, that has usually gone by that name, it must be confessed that it falls far short of meeting all the requirements of the human soul. Or, if one confines himself to the definition of the term as given by the lexicographers, which signifies nothing except what Rationalism might once have been, or at least, what the manipulators of words conceived it to be, then too, it must be deemed unworthy of commendation.

Regarding simply the more ancient, and what, perhaps, even now, is the more popular application of the word, I am not a Rationalist. But, by the same token, I am not a "Christian" and do not believe in "God" or "heaven" or "hell." To one who will not allow to words the benefit of expansion, there is not very much at the present day which is worthy of belief.

Taking language as it was, rather than as it is, would fasten us to Materialism; for as I have already said in a published article: "The Kingdom of Heaven has no vernacular. Spirituality is entirely dependent on bor-

rowed words. 'Spirit' itself originally signified the air. 'Soul' was the mortal life. The name 'god' was once shared in common with the Most High and creatures of low estate. Even now we have, in England, 'lords' of Parliament, and in America, 'lords' of creation. 'Christ,' at first, was any one who had been anointed. 'Jesus' and the Hebraic 'Joshua' had designated hundreds of human beings before the Great Teacher came. 'Heaven' was that great expanse which is *heaved up* over our heads. 'Hell,' as an English word, had no association with punishment. 'Hades,' 'Gehenna,' and 'Tartarus' were likewise exclusively of the earth and very earthy."

Words may be stubborn things, but the progressive ages compel them to enlarge their borders until they take on meanings of which the original word-makers had no conception.

The question is not, what have been the shortcomings of Rationalism in the past, but how much ground may it properly be made to cover today? Bacon defines a Rationalist as "one who proceeds in his disquisitions and practice wholly upon reason." Perhaps such an one may be found who rejects Christ and immortality. But dare we affirm that such rejection is a necessity of unaided human reason? Surely, the affirmation would savor strongly of infidelity.

Some devout Christians find it impossible to exercise faith at all times and under all circumstances. Is that the fault of faith? Shall we say that any particular system is false because men have sometimes failed in comprehending or applying it? If so, all systems alike, whether Christian or Pagan, must be condemned.

I claim for Rationalism that it is a sufficient foundation for philosophy, morality, religious belief and sacred worship.



When Saint Paul depends on argument, as he so generally does, while making proselytes to Christianity, he is simply a Rationalist. When Christ says, "Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" he, too, is an advocate of Rationalism, as also while employing lilies and sparrows and manifold parables in appealing to men's logical faculty to convince them of the Eternal Goodness. Why, then, should we fear to confess Rationalism? It is a good word, and by good men and women should be rescued from the infamy which the church has unjustly bestowed upon it. "Nothing can be more groundless," says Lord Brougham, "than the jealousy of natural religion by the advocates of the revealed."

"Oh, yes," it will be said at this point," we, too, believe in the fullest exercise of reason, with this precaution, that what the Bible says—that is, what we think it says—must not be reasoned away. This limitation of one's freedom is about as consistent as the mother's admonition, "Certainly, my boy, I am willing you should learn to swim, but until you know how, you must not go near the water."

Not only is man obligated to use his reason on all religious questions, but this obligation involves another, that of accepting the deductions of reason, even though they may conflict with his early teaching, or with the tenets of faith of his mother or grand-mother.

We concede that some men have the gift of reasoning in a very small degree, and that for these, an arbitrary authority—priest, book, creed or church—is of very great convenience. Yet, even in this case, a man is not a man at all unless he can reason enough to judge whether the so-called authority to which he is about to pin himself for better or worse until death dissolves the contract,

is trustworthy. At the very outset, therefore, he is called upon to rationally settle the great question on which everything else is to be based. In spite of himself he must be a Rationalist even while deciding that he is not one, and turning over his soul to some outward authority. Thus to enslave himself may be his necessity but it is nevertheless most deplorable. He is giving his better self into the keeping of a master who may or may not be kind-hearted. He may come to be told that his own dead child, love's first-born, is probably writhing in endless torture; but there is no appeal. If his spiritual master says it, nothing remains for the poor slave but to do the best he can to believe it. He must manifest the same unbounded confidence as shown by the boy when he exclaimed: "I will ask my mother, and if she says it's so, it's so anyway, even if it isn't so."

And these ecclesiastical masters, who take as much pride in counting their devotees as do Russian landowners in commanding their serfs, have been telling the over-credulous, for example, that the identical body which is buried in the cemetery will re-appear on the wonderful day of judgment. "Not so," cries Rationalism; and the "Not so" of numerous questions is coming more and more to be heard and respected.

In the sixteenth century, some large, deeply-buried bones were dug out of the earth in England. "What are these?" asked the explorers; and the theologians, always ready with an answer, as such claimants of special divine surveillance ever should be, insisted that they were the bones of the "fallen angels," and gloried exceedingly in this new and startling evidence of the truth of Miltonian Orthodoxy. Those who depended on the exercise of reason were quick to discover nothing more nor less in these skeletons than the bones of fallen ele-

phants. At this late day the naturalists of the past are beginning to receive the credit which was piously denied them while they lived. Modern thinkers remain to be condemned. These are the "poor" whom we have always with us. We stone the prophets who are sent to us—until they are dead, and then canonize them.

Theology, as a whole, is finding fewer bones in the angelic kingdom than were formerly found, yet still its various systems include much too much of corporality. We have outgrown the custom of punishing the *body* of one who commits suicide, burying the remains beside the unconsecrated highway, with a stake driven through them, while all funeral rites are denied; and, in America, we do not allow graves to put a stop to railroads, as is the case in China; still, the symbols of flesh and blood, which the Jews obtained from animals, and Christians from Christ, are too often allowed to completely obscure the living spirit to which it is the mission of flesh and blood simply to draw attention. The drapery has become a cheap substitute for the thing clothed. To shield and protect this drapery has seemed to be the chief concern of the church. History—which is nothing but the drapery of God's providences on earth—is regarded as eminently sacred while dealing with ancient Jews or early Christians, but exceedingly profane the moment it comes to deal with anybody else. Christ on the cross is simply an historical fact, until spiritualized by the yearning spirit of man. It is this spiritualization which contains all the merit. No kind or degree of history, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, can ever save an immortal soul. History, as such, is never sacred, only in the sense that all things are sacred in which the spirit of God is operating. Names, places and habitations should never be exalted above their true significance, for the smallest soul of the smallest child is greater than all of these.

Yet these objects of outward circumstance have constituted the bloodiest fields of ecclesiastical warfare. As the Romans used to make gods of gold and silver and then hire guards to prevent their being stolen, so the priests of later days, with an equal want of confidence in the ability of Jehovah to defend his own belongings, have surrounded him with stubborn creed, cruel threat, and heartless curse.

Wherever the doctrine of man's total or natural depravity still lingers in the church, it cannot be expected that Rationalism will be looked upon with any degree of favor. It would be decidedly irrational to ask a man who is inherently incapable of evolving any good thought or righteous purpose to go down into his own reason in search of anything godly on which to rely. Whether there be any merit in this totally depraved dogma of depravity or not, I suppose we shall never know until we find someone who has consistently lived up to it.

But if it be true, as Festus says, that "Heaven kindly gave our blood a moral flow," it need be no dangerous matter for man to think for himself. Is it not true? Does not every mother believe it to be true? Says Michelet: "What painful dismay would beset her if some gloomy thinker, some awkward sophist, should dare tell her that the child is born bad, that man is depraved before his birth and other such fine philosophical and legendary inventions. But women are mild and patient, they only turn a deaf ear. If they had believed that, if for a moment they had seriously accepted such ideas, all would soon have been ended. Uncertain and discouraged, they would not have put their whole life into a cradle, and the neglected child must have died. There would have been no humanity; history would have come to an end at its very commencement."

But the irrational creed is still saying of men, in



these exact words : "They fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. \* \* \* From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."

It is because those bearing the evangelical name do not hesitate to swear by this creed, (perhaps swear is the proper word), that nearly all kinds of amusements, at one time or another, have been placed under ban ; the law being that if one couldn't pray, he shouldn't play ; and that if he could pray, he shouldn't do anything else. Two rules have been adopted : first, ascertain what a man would naturally like to do ; and, second, don't let him do it. Punch's idea, as applied to family government, has largely prevailed.

"Mary, where is the baby?"

"In the other room."

"Go directly and see what he is doing, and tell him he mustn't."

In puritanical times a certain young lady was told that it was wicked to wear curls. When she was "converted" she tried to make her hair straight, but in spite of comb and brush and conversion, it would not stay straight. Nature is stronger than dogma.

One may try with equal persistency to straighten out the doctrine of Trinity—(if I seem to use this word irreverently let it be remembered that, not being a Bible term, it can lay claim to no special sanctity),—the doctrine, which, as someone has said, should not be illustrated by three men riding in one gig, but by one man riding in three gigs—the mathematical enigma of three times one is one, which in the language of Martin

Luther, "is the more to be believed because impossible;" but the latent Rationalism of the human mind will never find anything in the Supreme Being but the most perfect unity.

Rationalism, also, in its own way, discovers the necessity of conversion and the new birth. To be born again is what some of our most prominent doctors of divinity sadly need. Many a good soul was born but yesterday, when it succeeded in bursting the walls of its old theological cocoon and spreading its wings in the broad sunlight of the advanced thought of the age.

It need hardly be said that to the Rationalist the great book of nature, as scientifically interpreted, will always be worthy of profound respect. The manuscripts of God, as dug out of the earth, are liable to at least as little misinterpretation as has been the fate of those other manuscripts from which various conflicting versions of Scripture have been made, and out of which an untold number of clashing sects have grown. Scientific methods are not infallible, but it is nevertheless true that there are

"Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones and good in everything."

In the Epistles of Creation, if anywhere, a real Trinity shall be revealed, for,

"Since the universe began  
And till it shall be ended,  
The soul of nature, soul of man,  
And soul of God are blended."

I am aware that men of science are commonly charged with heresy. According to the legal definition of heresy, the charge is, and should be, sustained.—"An opinion of divine things, invented by human reason, openly taught, and obstinately defended." This defini-

tion plainly shows what people were thinking about at the time it was framed.

They supposed that any opinion invented by human reason must necessarily be wrong. If reason touched it never so lightly it must be poisonous. Some of the virus of Eden's original serpent was given to it. Still, one might reason all that one pleased and arrive at any conclusion conceivable without being a "heretic" unless he had the courage and the manhood to openly teach what he conscientiously believed. Even then, he was not a "heretic," if, when confronted by the doctors of divinity, he was enough of a coward to say that he was sorry on account of what he had advocated and to promise not to do so any more. But in the event of his turning out to be richly endowed with faithfulness to his convictions and largely possessed of moral heroism, he was roasted alive, while the meaner stuff of which his prosecutors were made, still remained to encumber the earth.

But do representative men of science believe in the supernatural? They certainly do not deny its existence, if by the term supernatural is meant a spiritual force or being which mysteriously permeates the material universe. To my mind, the belief in the spiritual origin and government of the physical and moral world, is a valid acceptance of the supernatural. This does not oblige one to give credence to every ghost story that has come to be classified under that head.

Herbert Spencer may be taken for a Rationalistic scientist, standing at the head of the list. While others try to make it appear that he is a Materialist, his own writings are replete with evidences to the contrary. Referring to this, he says: "I have, in fact, pretty well given up attempting to meet this charge, perpetually refuted. Practically the attitude of mind of those who

make it may be thus expressed:—"You shall be a Materialist whether you like it or not; for, otherwise, we could not vilify you."

John Fiske, another representative man in scientific circles, referring to Herbert Spencer, writes: "He would not express himself quite so strongly in favor of a belief in a future life as I do, but he has no objection to offer to the argument, with which he declares himself as generally in full sympathy."

Rationalism never need be driven to the direful necessity of accepting that peculiar materialistic system of philosophy which recently called forth the cutting satire, "that mourners hereafter be given front seats at geological lectures, and the most deeply bereaved provided with chip hammers to collect specimens."

Any system that should endeavor to disprove the existence of an unseen, living, spiritual world would be entitled to no respect, and could lead to no happiness, even if it should hit the truth. In that event, the almost universal opinion that truth, wherever found, is grand, joyous and soul-inspiring, would be overthrown.

Dr. Johnson once said to a friend, "I would consent to have a limb amputated provided I could recover my spirits." The world could better afford to have all its limbs amputated than to lose its spirituality.

Experiment has demonstrated that a tree derives comparatively little of its substance from the crude earth, while its chief bulk comes from water, light and air. It lives from above, not from below. In a much higher and grander sense this is emphatically true of man.

In spite of the bad light into which Rationalism has been thrown by ecclesiastics, one may yet be a Rationalist and adopt for his creed "Quench not the spirit." Let not sin, fear or painful doubt suppress the better self.



In the far West there is a lake whose waters are so fully impregnated with mineral salts that any bird which tries to swim therein, obtains a hard coating upon its wings, which in time so loads them down that at last the poor fowl is drawn beneath the surface, where death is inevitable. How like worldliness is this! How it fetters the wings of the soul, dragging it into the darksome depths! What shall we say of such shameful treatment of one's divine portion? It is diametrically opposed to every dictate of Rationalism.

The general exercise of reason would not lead to unity of opinion, for there will always be as many different conclusions on great questions as there are different grades of intellect; but an important point would be gained in knowing that the most thoughtful minds were most likely to be right. Under the *regime* of popular evangelicalism, brains are in no high repute, inasmuch as the "faith" of the most ignorant man or woman has at least as large an estimate put upon it as that of the ripest scholar. Indeed, it not infrequently happens that illiteracy takes the premium and walks off with the medal.

Rationalism will have the advantage of encouraging and stimulating mental improvement, to a greater extent than could be consistently expected or demanded of the "faith cure" Christians.

It will be seen that the word "faith" is here employed in its abused—which unfortunately is its most general—acceptation. Any system of Rationalism which leaves genuine, clear sighted, intelligent faith out of the question, is little better—yet some better—than the faith which leaves out Rationalism. If the one has sometimes failed to discover a Supreme Being, the other is yet more uncommendable for having sometimes given us a

Supreme Being too hateful to worship. If the one has sacrilegiously renounced the supernatural, with far greater sacrilege has the other persisted in denouncing the natural. If the one has frequently failed to catch a glimpse of the spiritual universe, it has certainly been more fortunate in this respect than the other, which has usually described the spiritual universe as being predestined, in considerable part, to eternal wrath. But comparisons are odious, although sometimes useful.

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ saith the Lord.” Come now, and let us not reason together while the Lord is left out. Any reasoning which does not include Him as chief counselor will come to naught; just as any reasoning which with entire-heartedness does not depend on reason will find naught to come to.

I venture to assert that all men at their best, whatever may be their name, profession or sect, are simply Rationalists.

When perfect honesty and sincerity are uppermost, when the bias of early influence, or the arbitrary voice of external authority is no longer heard, everything temporarily fades out of the mind except what Reason approves. At such times there stands beside Reason a most lovely angelic form, which may be clearly identified as Reason’s own dearly beloved child. Her name is Faith.

Since it must be so that the real selves of men and women are rationalistic, what remains to be said except to urge the application.

Man is a being of unlimited wants and aspirations. Let him therefore adopt no system that cannot be made to grow as he himself grows. Progress is the watchword.

Rationalism is no substitute for Universalism, no rival of Christianity. It is merely the soil from which

these rich fruits have derived somewhat of their substance and flavor. Rightly understood, Christ is still the world's need. Correctly apprehended, Christian Protestantism is sufficient for the eternally developing soul. It is the storehouse of whatever fragments had been gathered from all the great religions of the world. In addition to this it allows new discoveries of truth to be accepted and assimilated. Moreover, its very genius is grossly violated the moment it refuses to any man the blessed privilege of interpreting the Bible according to his own best light and conscience. It says to every individual, "Be yourself the pope; issue papal edicts to your own soul, and pronounce anathemas on your own sins." What liberty is this! We saw city after city in the old world voting the freedom of its corporation to General Grant. How small a matter, compared with the glorious freedom which true Protestantism offers to all her votaries. She opens the gates of the wide universe and says, "Go and come as you like." If anywhere amid the infinitude of spiritual treasure, you find a gem that pleases you, take it. You are welcome to its everlasting possession. The Heavenly Father is ever saying to his children, "Help yourself; whatever is Mine is thine."

Most heartily can we join with Oliver Wendell Holmes in singing:—

"That one unquestioned text we read,  
All doubts beyond, all fear above,  
Nor crackling pile, nor cursing creed  
Can burn or blot it; God is love."

And with that other inspired poet:—

"Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
Were the whole earth of parchment made,  
Were every single stick a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love  
Of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll  
Contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky."



G O D .



## G O D .

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Canst thou by searching find out God?—Job.xi:7.

Up to this moment in the world's history, all civilized, and most uncivilized people, have been earnestly and conscientiously engaged in trying to find God. If sun, moon and stars were once worshiped, it was because the idea prevailed that they were the habitations of deities. If sculptors were occupied in making images of wood or stone, the thought was that these devices would be accepted by the gods as bodies for their weary spirits. When animals received sacred homage, they were no longer regarded as animals, but as living vessels for the divine essence. When the ark, or sacred chest, was built, the fancy which occupied the mind of the people was much like our own when we frame little bird-houses, expecting the fowls of the air to make their homes therein. All that gold and precious gems could do to make the cage enticing was done, in order that the Heavenly Dove might be persuaded to accept the offering. When Solomon built his magnificent temple, he supposed Jehovah could not resist the inducement of becoming its immediate and fortunate tenant.

At the advent of Christ, human nature adopted no new principle in the work of searching for God, but simply made a new application of that which was both old and general. "At last!" cried Christianity in rapturous tones, "At last, the true God is discovered. He



dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but in the Son of David. Here and here only is he to be sought and found. In absolute entirety he is clothed with mortal flesh. To this living image let all men bow."

In due time arose numerous sects and began to tear each other to pieces. Come into our church, was the cry of each, for we only have the telescopic and microscopic instruments through which God can be really seen. Our reflectors are the brightest and our glass the clearest which the spiritual market affords. Go elsewhere and you will surely be cheated!

Then came philosophy, poetry, art and science; each and all engaged in the same grand enterprise, each and all claiming to have made the important discovery of the real God.

I affirm that all human effort, all philosophical and scientific acumen, receive their chief stimulus from this everlasting search after a Supreme Being.

Darwin's doctrine of the Descent of Man, and Agassiz's theory of special creations have their foundations on common ground.

Agnosticism is simply trying to keep its mouth shut while others rattle off their noisy pretensions. It adopts the "still hunt" as the surest method of obtaining the desired end.

As for Atheism, it pretends that there is no God to search for, only that it may spur others forward in hot pursuit, and compel them by opposition to produce the very strongest arguments in support of the faith they cherish.

Washington was right: "If there had been no God, men would have been forced to imagine one."

The fools referred to in Scripture, who have said in their heart, there is no God, are neither numerous nor



dangerous. There is another class which is both. I mean those who so describe the Supreme Being that the heart which believes in him is more agonized than comforted. Considering God's ill-repute—for which theology must be held responsible—the marvel is, that faith still possesses mankind. We cannot read the things which some of the Almighty's worshipers have said concerning him without piously and earnestly praying that the dear Lord may be speedily delivered from his friends.

The Koran represents God as declaring: "Those who disbelieve, we will surely cast to be boiled in hell-fire. So often as their skins shall be well burned, we will give them other skins in exchange that they may taste the sharper torment again." And this: "They shall be dragged on their faces into hell, and it shall be said unto them, 'Taste ye that torment of hell-fire which ye rejected as a falsehood.'" Again: "The true believers, lying on couches, shall look down upon the infidels in hell and laugh them to scorn." All this is sickening. But do we hear better sentiments when we leave heartless Mohammedanism and give ear to some of the followers—at a distance—of Christ?

Tertullian was one of the Christian Fathers, and this is his message of love: "At that greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment, how shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates liquefying in fiercer flames than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot fires with their deluded pupils," etc., etc.

The language of the Episcopal Rubric is quite preferable, although equally suggestive of cruel possibilities: "From thy wrath and everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us."

We wonder not at the words of Bunyan: "I blessed the condition of dog and toad, because they had no soul to perish under the everlasting weight of hell."

Nor do we see any inconsistency in the reasoning of Bloody Mary where she says: "As the souls of heretics are hereafter to be eternally burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the divine vengeance by burning them on earth." Not less brutal is the conception of God as entertained by Jonathan Edwards: "You cannot stand an instant before an infuriated tiger even; what, then, will you do when God rushes against you in all his wrath?"

Even children, such as the dear Master took in his arms and blessed, have not escaped ecclesiastical venom. Here is the Milk for Babes which is furnished in a London tract: "Listen to the tremendous, the horrible uproar of millions and millions and millions of tormented creatures, mad with the fury of hell. Oh, the screams of fear, the groanings of horror, the yells of rage, the cries of pain, the shouts of agony, the shrieks of despair from millions on millions."

It is not difficult to understand the cry of the Rev. Albert Barnes: "In the distress and anguish of my own spirit, I confess I see not one ray to disclose to me the reason why man should suffer to all eternity. I have never seen a particle of light thrown on these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind. It is all dark—dark—to my soul, and I cannot disguise it."

No one can respect God and John Calvin at the same moment. This teacher of infant damnation, this murderer, in a moral sense, of Michael Servetus, having none of the tenderness of Albert Barnes, seems to gloat in saying: "Forever harassed with a dreadful tempest, they shall feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God,

and transfixed and penetrated by mortal stings, terrified by the thunder-bolts of God, and broken by the weight of His hand, so that to sink into any gulfs would be more tolerable than to stand for a moment in these terrors."

It will be answered that these men are dead (as they ought to be) and should be let alone. But unfortunately their souls go marching on. Their dogmas still live. Come down to this day and generation. Spurgeon is a great sensation in the world's metropolis. He says: "In fire exactly like that which we have on earth, thy body will lie, asbestos-like, forever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament."

In view of these quotations, which, after all, are simply representative of a great part of the world's literature, is it not astonishing that any of love's tenderness still survives, and that any religion whatever is left? That men will continue to believe in a God in spite of all that has been said against him, is sufficient proof that there really is one. Theology is its own worst enemy. If it can endure itself, it ought to be able to endure any form of infidelity which it were possible to invent. What Epicurus said three hundred years before Christ, is equally applicable to the Christian era. "Not he is godless who rejects the gods of the crowd, but rather he who accepts them."

In the old Saxon language, "god" and "good" are the same word; but, as we have seen, in the later Saxon of Orthodox Christianity, they bear no resemblance.

What has saved us from rankest Atheism? Not creeds, but poesy. The muses have ever sung:

“What dost thou fear? His wisdom reigns  
 Supreme confessed;  
 His power and love are infinite,  
 So trust and rest.”

And to these words of Adelaide Proctor, Gurney adds :

“Yes, God is good; in earth and sky,  
 From ocean depths and spreading wood,  
 Ten thousand voices seem to cry,  
 ‘God made us all, and God is good.’”

While Robert Burns devoutly says to the Most High :

“Sure thou, Almighty, canst not act  
 From cruelty or wrath.”

And Tennyson joins the chorus:

“Ah, yet, I have had some glimmer at times, in my gloomiest woe,  
 Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for aught that I  
 know;

But the God of love and of hell together they cannot be thought,  
 And if there be such a God

May this great God curse him and bring him to naught.”

And so we can all say with Josephine Pollard :

“I take the plummet of faith and strive  
 The depths of God’s love to divine,  
 And I find that the weight goes down and down  
 Below the length of the line.”

The old masters tried to put Deity on canvas, and succeeded in giving us three bearded heads which were reverently called the Blessed Trinity. After all, it matters little whether this work is attempted with brush or pen, pigments or speech, the result is the same,—a hydra-headed monstrosity. Try to grasp the thought that “God is the soul’s inmost,” and, “nearer to thee than thou art to thyself,” for “in him we live and move and have our being.” No one can think badly of God who thus discovers him. Alas for some of us, he is not too

far away, but too near. "Those who live on Mount Athos do not see Mount Athos."

Again, some have erred in supposing that God never comes to himself—is never conscious—except in the human mind. He is equally within and without. The universe is God. I am aware that this is Pantheism and that it has been anathematised. Yet I would that all men were Pantheists. Surely the universe is God in spite of the sneer of priest or the sting of prejudice. The mistake has been in regarding the universe as a body instead of a *soul* possessing a body. Man is not a body carrying a spirit, but a spirit carrying a body. So of the universe. The resemblance between Father and child is very close.

There has been more humor in theology than anywhere else. The idea of a God, mathematically limited by boundary lines, and being somewhere *in* the universe, just as "man's soul" is supposed to be located somewhere in the human organism—heart or head, nerves or blood—is sufficiently absurd; but when we add to this the strange fancy that the Almighty is now upon a throne, and anon paying a flying visit to a camp meeting, and again pausing to listen to a prayer which supplicates him to descend quickly, go speedily, come without delay, remain long, watch over certain affairs, or protect certain interests, the case becomes much more grotesque than sublime. The colored boy answered naturally enough when asked by a pious revivalist if he had found the Lord: "Why, sir, I didn't know that the Lord was lost."

Christians should begin the reformation of theology by banishing Materialism from their conceptions of men. Why do we follow the human body to the grave as though we were following our beloved? Why do we cover the tomb with flowers as though we decked the brow of our precious one? Why do we consecrate the



cold clay of the cemetery? Why warm the heartless clods with our burning tears of affection? Where is he or she who went forth in the darkness of night? Surely not in the dreary, uninhabited churchyard. Nothing in the nature of creation, or of men, or of angels would ever send or tempt one to abide there. Our dead are where love is, where we are. Where then shall we place the flowers? As near ourselves as possible. Where shall we shed our tears, made sweet with beautiful memories? Where but in our own beautiful homes. Where shall we look for our translated darlings? In the atmosphere about us. What atmosphere? Not the physical, but that of our own hearts, made pure, bright and clear by right living, firm trusting and spiritual longing. In this way also must we search after God.

Phidias was remonstrated with for chiseling the backs of his statues with such painstaking care, since they were to be set against the wall where they would not be observed. "But the gods will see them," replied the sculptor. Phidias was a Pagan, but Christianity would be better if it could have a host of such Pagans. We polish with utmost nicety the side of our life that the world is to look at, while leaving all the other parts rough and ugly. Do we not herein evince a doubt that God is allwhere?

Not till 1774 did Priestley discover oxygen, yet mankind had been constantly breathing it, and it was their life. How much more intimate than this, is the connection between the Universal Soul and man's existence. We breathe forever the Holy Spirit and know it not. It is in every molecule of blood, in every fiber of nerve and cell of brain, and yet we make ourselves into whited sepulchres.

Commodore Vanderbilt once said that he trusted Providence because "Providence is as square as a brick."

This was his peculiar way of saying that he had found God to be always right. You may not like the commercial phraseology in which the idea is clothed, but it is much better than the Trinitarian interpretation. It might be no bad plan to take the one from the creed and put the other in. The common hearer would be more likely to understand just what is meant.

How shall we pray to God? Naturally.

Any set terms such as, "for Christ's sake," "in Christ's name," "thine be the kingdom, the power and the glory," "amen," etc., none of which originally appear in our Lord's prayer, need not be used, and should never be employed as mere forms. There is a rational interpretation which may be given to them, and, if given, there is no objection to repeating them as often as one's soul can fill them with true meaning.

In saying "for Christ's sake," we are not to think of him as a being of flesh and blood who was crucified, but as the representative of a great system of spirituality, by which and through which we hope to attain to perfection. While praying "in Christ's name," we should bear in mind that this signifies that we are not seeking the gifts of Mammon, but of the spirit concerning which Christ bore witness.

If the saying of "Amen" had any effect in obtaining answers to prayer, the kingdom of God would have come and his will would have been done on earth as it is in Heaven, long ago; but the trouble is, the majority of those who use the word do not know what it means, and a majority of this majority do not care enough about it to inquire. Perhaps they think that God knows, and that that is enough. Then let the whole prayer be still mumbled in Latin. Why have we made progress? It is no worse to address God in a dead language than it

is to take a living language to the sacred altar and there murder it.

Laying stress on details is another fault which largely abounds in prayer service. This will continue as long as Christians themselves magnify details. I like what General Grant said when told by a friend that many were praying for him: "Yes," wrote the general, for he was too feeble to speak, "Catholics, Protestants, Jews and all the good people of the nation, of all politics, and all religions, and all nationalities, have united in wishing or praying for my improvement. I am a great sufferer all the time, but the facts you have related are compensation for much of it. All that I can do is to pray that the prayers of all these good people may be answered so far as to have us all meet in another and a better world." That was the best prayer of all—so broad and unselfish! It ascended above all flesh and the sufferings of flesh, above earth and the groanings of earth. The other petitions were as good as sympathy could make them, but they lacked scope. It is comparatively a very trifling thing that a General Grant should live or that he should die; but it is a supremely great thing whether or not all mankind are to be raised to a blessed immortality.

In no sense should prayer be regarded as a substitute for human endeavor or foresight. Wendell Phillips wrote these significant lines in a young lady's autograph album: "After a day's weary march, Mahomet was camping with his followers. One of them said, 'I will loose my camel, and commit it to God.' 'Friend,' said the prophet, 'tie thy camel and commit it to God.'" Most people think it quite proper to commit their ill-health to the Almighty. It is their good health for which he asks. They go to the Lord in emergencies and forget him at all other times. They ask him to



come between the law of cause and effect so that they can avoid the consequences of their own blunders.

Praying for temporalities is natural and proper enough for those who belong to the lowest plane of Christian life. For example, to ask for rain. Those who do so are not supposed to understand that they are slyly hinting to Providence that human forethought has got the start of the divine; or that they are visiting the Most High with an insidious reprimand. If the suppliant simply means "I want a shower for my grass and might as well say so and free my mind as to keep thinking about it," he is, to say the least, innocent enough. But the moment he pretends that his wants must resolve themselves into God's purposes, he is slightly impious.

The good people of Boston once begged "Father Wilson" of the First Church of that city to stop praying for rain, because, since he began, some of the neighboring towns had been flooded.

As one reaches the higher grades of Christian experience, his worship concerns itself less with loaves and fishes and more with spiritual principles. I have no objection to childish praying, but, on the contrary, heartily commend it in its proper place, only let it be confined to children. But I do seriously object to that parental and priestly deception by which juvenile minds are made to believe that their prayers can be made the means of miraculously swaying the divine will and pleasure. "If you pray for a Christmas present, perhaps the Lord will send you one," says the pious mother to her little son. He accordingly prays for a rocking-horse. How much of the spirit of Christ, do you think, enters into the service? How much is he thereby advanced toward the kingdom of true righteousness? None whatever. If the rocking-horse comes, the boy is fooled into

supposing that his prayer has, in some way, moved the great Miracle-Worker. When a child has been successfully fooled often enough he will, of course, become a fool.

Prayer is the soul's atmosphere. It warms and beautifies, expands and fructifies, spiritualizes and purifies every soul which truly engages in it. Those who want or expect more than this have never been thoroughly Christianized.

Says the eloquent Chapin, "Each thing lives according to its kind; the heart by love, the intellect by truth, the higher nature of man by intimate communion with God." Let the higher nature prevail. Whenever it would approach the fountain of all life, let the lower nature be effectually suppressed.

Lofty aspiration is answerable prayer. Mrs. Jameson has beautifully said: "What we truly and earnestly aspire to be, that, in some sense, we are. The mere aspiration, by changing the frame of the mind, for the moment realizes itself."

To cry out from the depths of the soul, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove," is the surest way to bring spiritual wings into existence. Darwin thinks the eagle got its wings because away back in the dim vista of the past some earthbound creature had a longing to fly. If this be science, it is far better religion. Let us never forget to pray—childishly if still we must—but as men and Christians, if we can.

Where shall the search for God be successfully made? He is everywhere, but it is not everywhere that he can be recognized. In our own inner life he awaits discovery. There, and there only will he consent to manifest himself in his fullest glory and perfection. If then we would know him, whom to know aright is life eternal, we must not bind ourselves to externals. Scripture itself must not be accepted too bodily. The letter

killeth, while that which is between the lines giveth life to the soul whose vision is clear.

Let no one pretend that he has communed with God unless his character is consistent with such high claim. Says Emerson: "You shall not enumerate your brilliant acquaintances, nor tell me by their titles what books you have read. I am to infer that you keep good company by your better information and manners, and to infer your reading from the wealth and accuracy of your conversation." In proportion as we come to hear less, we shall see more of real Christianity.

If our cup runneth over the world need not be informed of that fact by bell and crier. Let people see for themselves.

" 'Tis not the deeds the loudest lauded  
That brightest shine;  
There's many a virtue unapplauded,  
And yet divine.

The outward show may be delusive,  
A cheating name;  
The inner spirit is conclusive  
Of worth or shame."

When worldliness becomes the monopolist of human life, it is the bane of existence. Childish foolishness is funny enough, but when men and women are full grown their childishness ceases to be funny. For example, we laugh at the little fellow who still remained at the supper table notwithstanding all the family had been called out to witness a beautiful rainbow. "If God will let that rainbow stay there," said he, "till I get through supper, I will look at it." In what respect does this youth differ from the numerous adults who tell us that one world at a time is enough, and that if God has any other world he may keep it until they have finished with this when they will condescend to attend to that.

It may be necessary to look downward, or earthward, before looking upward, but it is not well to make that occupation our sole, or soul, business. It is wise to eat, drink and be merry, but if this is all we attach to existence as we move along, what kind of a procession of animals are we?

"There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." "The Lord weigheth the spirits." These Bible flowers are just as fresh and sweet as though they had been culled to-day instead of three thousand years ago.

It thus appears that in respect to some things we can do no better than to humbly sit at the feet of the ancient Jews. They ought to have known something of God, for they elected him their political chieftain and for many years had no other acknowledged head to their government. In their best moments—not in their worst—their poets, prophets or wise men came as close to the Most High as human nature can approach. But while accepting much of Jewish literature as being the medium of divine truth, is there any occasion for denying equal inspiration to the longing souls of the nineteenth century? No; just as the rain fills all the flowers whose cups are open, but leaves undeveloped buds to their own hardness and bitterness, so truth comes alike to all, but does not in all cases meet with like reception. But the water which the bud rejects seeks the root of the plant, and there supplies the nurture, which, in due time, will reach and bless the blossom.

Thus divine goodness will never take "no" for an answer. Turn from it today, it will come tomorrow; shut one avenue, it will seek another; for

"Deep below, as high above,  
Sweeps the circle of God's love."

EVIL.





## E V I L.

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I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things.

—Isaiah xlv: 7.

Most Christians have tried to relieve the Almighty of a responsibility, which, according to Scripture, he has clearly taken upon himself. Those who have pretended to know all about divine plans and purposes, have told us that it was not God who originated evil, but the devil. According to these philosophers the creator made a “tree of the *knowledge* of good and evil” before ever such a thing as evil existed.

We have heard a great deal said about the “mystery of evil.” As a matter of fact, evil is not one jot more mysterious than good is, or more so than is a drop of water or a grain of sand. Up to this present moment, everything which exists, human life particularly, is clothed with impenetrable mystery. Partially, however, and, indeed, sufficiently for all practical purposes, many things can be explained; and evil itself is one of these things.

Just as the world is today, God, from the very beginning, knew it would be, and in that knowledge there was no tinge of wrath or disappointment. There has been no miscarriage of his designs. If he had his life to live over again, (if such an expression may be pardoned), he would not make the slightest change in the physical or moral government of his universe.

Duke Alphonso of Castile had the presumption to suppose that if he had been present when creation was framed, he could have made some suggestions, which if followed, would have given us a much better world than we have. We are glad the duke was not there. He could not have made a single alteration that would not have been mischievous. Perhaps he would have put no temptation in the way of our first parents. Then he would have had the nice little problem to solve, how to get them out of their innocent babyhood. Adam and Eve were nothing but great, overgrown children. What God was looking for, as a finality, was full, strong, comprehensive manhood and womanhood. Continually basking in the sun, or lying lazily under the trees, eating fruit, would never result in a higher condition than that of a contented animal.

If our first parents had not been driven out of Paradise, the time would have come when their posterity would have had to voluntarily migrate or be literally crowded to the wall. God told them to vacate their little corner lot and go out into the great world and shift for themselves. Hence, Europe was made possible, America was discovered, *Boston was founded*, and we are here to praise the Lord for that infinite variety of opportunities and possibilities, physical, moral and spiritual, concerning which Adam and Eve never so much as dreamed.

As Crabbe says:

“’Tis well that man to all the varying states  
Of good and ill his mind accommodates.”

When one has thus learned to accommodate himself to circumstances, and to make the best of the inevitable, he has a flexibility of nature which will be of great value to him through time and through eternity. Discipline



is the greatest good, and evil is its minister. With Bryant we can sing :

“These struggling tides of life, that seem,  
In wayward, endless course to tend,  
Are eddies of the mighty stream  
That rolls to its appointed end.”

That Sunday School boy, who had undoubtedly lived in numerous tenement houses, answered more wisely than he knew, when the superintendent asked why Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise. “Because they could not pay the rent,” was the prompt reply. True enough! The compensation which one must pay for worthy and successful existence is a whole harvest of rich, ripe experiences. For such a harvest, a New England sand-hill is better fitted than the hot, stoneless muck of an Asiatic garden.

Perhaps it is true, as Menander says, that “All animals are more happy than men.” But what is the quality of their happiness? Is pigs’ luxury desirable? Pauline shall answer :

“To be holy, just and true,  
Is more than to be happy; it is life.  
And it is written that man shall not live  
By bread alone, but by each living word  
Of God shall man live. Therefore, human soul,  
Though sorely tried, live out thy tired life truly,  
For God sees. Live worthily, and use thy grief  
And all the sharp stones in thy pathway laid,  
To build a stairway, on whose rugged steps,  
Thy soul may mount toward the good and true,  
And gain its richest, noblest life through loss.”

If we must say with Pascal: “Evil is easily discovered, there is an infinite variety; good is almost unique;” and with Rochefoucauld: “Present evils triumph over philosophy;” and with Madame Swetchine: “There are times when it would seem as if God fished with a line,

and the devil with a net;" or with Bailey: "The best enjoyment is half disappointment to what we mean, or would have in this world;" or with Bishop Hall: "That which the French proverb hath of sickness is true of all evils, that they come on horseback and go away on foot;" or with Robertson: "The truest definition of evil is that which represents it as something contrary to nature;" or with Washington Irving: "With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief;" or with Figuier: "The presence of men on such or such parts of the earth, and the unequal distribution of evil on our globe, must remain unexplained;" and with Emerson: "We are always balked of a complete success;" and with John Stuart Mill: "We may ask why the human race should have been so constituted as to grovel in wretchedness and degradation for countless ages before a small portion of it was enabled to lift itself into the very imperfect state of intelligence, goodness and happiness which we enjoy;" and with Ingersoll: "I would make good health catching instead of disease;" if we must listen to these doleful sounds, which, perhaps, voice the sentiment of the thoughtless multitude, we will fly for relief to those blessed poets whose souls are more largely occupied with heaven's own revelations. Hear Collett:

"Through all the various shifting scene  
Of life's mistaken ill or good,  
Thy hand, O God! conducts unseen,  
The beautiful vicissitude."

And Thompson:

"We know that order shall appear  
When God has made his purpose clear."

And Holland :

“Evil is not a mystery, but a means  
Selected from the infinite resource  
To make the most of me.”

And Wordsworth :

“Hushed be every thought that springs  
From out the bitterness of things.”

And Falconer :

“’Tis ours on thine unerring laws to trust;  
With thee, great Lord, whatever is, is just.”

And Sargent :

“Evil shall boast not perpetuity.”

And Shakespeare :

“There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distill it out.”

And Adelaide Proctor :

“I think if thou couldst know,  
O soul that will complain,  
What lies concealed below  
Our burden and our pain—  
How just our anguish brings  
Nearer those longed-for things  
We seek for now in vain—  
I think thou wouldst rejoice and not complain.”

Yet, in spite of all which horrible prose has declared, and inspired poesy denied, evil is unaccountable and diabolical as well as inconsistent with any worthy conception of God, if what is called evangelical theology is true ; for, in that case, evil has no appointed end, but must live to curse human souls through all eternity. No wonder, therefore, that evil is generally regarded as an unsolvable mystery. Mysterious it would certainly be that God should have put an opponent into his universe or allowed one to come in whom he could not defeat. Perhaps the best thing ever said by Mr. Beecher is: “Evil

is nothing in the world but a part of the divine system by which we are to be unfolded."

It follows without saying that this rational solution of the great problem has no place for a personal devil. His satanic majesty is still retained, among the ignorant, for the purpose of frightening children out of their wits, —a purpose which, in too many instances, has been fulfilled to the letter—but, in proportion as philosophy comes in, the horns, hoofs and tail of demonology vanish in the distance.

There was once a sect called Satanians, who actually worshiped the devil; and they were quite consistent. Believing, with most Christians, that he is in a fair way to rule forever over a large majority of mankind, they thought him fairly entitled to a victor's honor. Martin Luther did not exactly worship him, but gave him a good stout recognition by throwing an ink-stand at his head.

It is not long since two doctors of divinity seriously discussed the question, Is the Devil a Spirit? One of them thought, in the language of Coleridge, that he was a kind of ghost who roams around and

"Sometimes comes down  
To visit his snug little farm, the earth,  
To see how his stock goes on."

But the other inquired, "How shall we say that the devil is a spirit, since we are required to believe that God is a spirit?" True enough! Could Jehovah and Satan have anything in common, especially their very substance? To such straits are men driven when they would try to pick up an unreasonable dogma with the fingers of reason.

The Miltonian idea is that the devil is a fallen angel. If we were to accept him at all, that would be the most reasonable conclusion. There was nothing else for him

to fall from. All evil is the offspring of good, and good is sufficiently able to take care of its own. Restoration is the office of all law and order. As surely as thistles are returned to their primitive elements, evil will return to its primitive condition. It is no further from an arch-angel to an arch-fiend, than it is from an arch-fiend to an arch-angel. The door between good and evil swings both ways.

No legend is needed to explain how sin got into the world. It came naturally and will have a natural departure. If it had come by miracle, it might have taken some such miracle as the death and resurrection of a God-man to dispose of it. Pandora's box is opened every day. Man's God-given nature is the key that turns the lock. Key and lock were made on purpose to fit each other.

Why should we blame Adam and Eve more than others. The only reason that they sinned first is that they were made first. The reason we sin is not that we are children of the primal pair, but that we are men and women. Any being less perfect than the infinite God must necessarily be prone to errors, intellectual, moral and spiritual. If this were not so, perfection would have no advantage over imperfection. God made us imperfect for the very good reason that he could not duplicate himself. There are such things as impossibilities. When we say that all things are possible with God, we do not believe, for a moment, that it would be possible for him to annihilate himself or to create a race of beings the equal of himself.

Sin therefore is the natural result of our necessary limitations. Bad as it is, it has its compensations. Moliere well says: "If all hearts were frank, just and honest, the major part of the virtues would be useless to us."



Let us honestly confess that we do not wish for such a state of things. If benevolence, charity, sympathy and helpfulness enlarge, adorn and spiritualize us, it is quite consistent to thank the good Lord for having arranged human nature so that there is constant occasion for the exercise of these excellent qualities.

It is pleasant to contemplate that sin has no root of its own,—that it is the legitimate accompaniment of imperfection and that it is the business of eternity to outgrow imperfection.

Take in your hand a phrenological chart and note all the organs which indicate character. Is there one organ too many? Is there one that could be spared without making the man something less? Is there one whose office is to do mischief? Is not every one indicative of good? In its practical application phrenology is not reliable, but in its fundamental principles it is not only a true science but a most emphatic protest against the doctrine of natural depravity.

Sinfulness is always the abuse of the virtues. It can have no other source. What is cowardice but overgrown cautiousness? What are gluttony and drunkenness but the too great exercise of necessary alimentiveness? What is avarice but an improper enlargement of frugality? What was the first biblical sin but a reckless application of a divinely implanted desire—that of obtaining knowledge?

If, now, we have succeeded in understanding the origin and nature of sin, it becomes our solemn duty to consider its consequences, both immediate and final.

Its immediate consequences are best taught by observation. Experience is too expensive. Does the sin of envy or jealousy prompt us to injure a rival? Let us remember the fate of the jealous Grecian. When a



statue had been erected to Theagenes of Thasos, on account of his many victories in the public games, it so strongly excited the hatred of one of his rivals that he went to it every night that he might throw it down by repeated blows. At last, unfortunately successful, he was able to move it from its pedestal, when he himself was crushed beneath its fall. Morally speaking, this is what happens every day. No man can try to injure another without inflicting the greatest wrong upon himself. Not Christ, but his persecutors, were most hurt.

That there is any real pleasure in committing sin, is the most pernicious superstition with which moralists are called upon to deal. The Greek word signifying wickedness comes from another Greek word signifying labor. Oh, how the heart must labor when sin enters! It is the eclipse of the soul. How heavy the shadows! How cold the atmosphere! Birds cease singing and flowers close their petals on that dreadful day.

"Oh, no;" says one; "you have told us that sin is a necessity, securing to mankind the greatest moral perfection. If so, we will take our fill." So is dirt a necessity. Sweep it off the earth and where would be our next year's harvest? Must we therefore set ourselves up as dirt-eaters? Everything has its proper place. Some things belong in our heads, some in our hearts, and others under our heels. Each has its appointed mission.

We make sin our good when we make it our deadliest foe. We put it to a proper use by overcoming it. Great souls feed on great victories. If the case is reversed, if man is vanquished and sin triumphant, it becomes a most cruel tyrant.

In one short moment, many a man or woman has sinned away the greater part of life's happiness. In the still hours of the night, what unavailing tears have been

shed because once when sin knocked at the door, we answered impulsively, "Come in!" With smiling face the visitor accepted the thoughtless invitation, and came—to stay. If a father was to punish his child as sin punishes its victim, he would be arrested for inhuman conduct. If man was to beat horse or dog as sin beats an immortal soul, the stern mandate of law would be laid heavily upon him through the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Yet, strange to say, we scarcely utter a protest when we see earth's children scourged from morn till night by a most heartless monster.

Beware! The spirit of man can endure hardship, want, loss of friends, or any guiltless misfortune, without injury. But it cannot assimilate sin and retain the sweet essence of life.

Platinum is a very valuable metal. Its excessive resistance to heat makes it quite useful in the arts and sciences. A temperature that will melt down fire-clay and cause steel to run like water has no effect upon it. Put a platinum wire no larger than a hair into the blast furnace, where stones would turn to fluid, and it comes out as unharmed as though it had been in the ice-chest. How like a fire-proof soul is this. Alas, it is not fire-proof! Put a bit of lead into the crucible with the platinum, and both metals melt together and the crucible is destroyed. How aptly this may illustrate the effects of sin. From day to day we are constantly building up character with such metals as the moral world affords. Let each metal be tried by the builder of life's temple, that it may be rejected in case it fails to have the true ring. Even gold, with its power to withstand the strongest acids, finds its destructive enemy in one of the common commodities of our every day use. Sin, and sin only, is the corroding substance of human character.

Shun little sins. Big ones have no individuality. They are simply accumulations. The trouble with the world is not dirt, but dust. Mountains are made of dirt, but dust settles upon our faces and garments as well as upon our household gods. To keep everything clean is religion. To keep one's self "unspotted from the world" is to deal heroically with one's little faults and vices, and this is biblical Christianity, "pure and undefiled," without dogma or creed or any of the thirty-nine—or the thousand and thirty-nine—articles, which men have been tortured into believing.

Nor is it sufficient to ply the duster on the fronts of furniture and goods, while the hidden parts are shamefully neglected. Washington Allston was once on his way to a banquet with a friend, when he suddenly stopped and exclaimed, "I have just discovered a rent in my clothing and must return and have it repaired." "But," said the other, "it is out of sight where nobody will know of it." "I shall know of it," insisted Allston, "and that is enough;" and he refused to attend the party until his garments were put in order.

If the raiment of the soul as well as that of the body were made subject to public inspection, how many people there are who would turn back on their way to church, to take a few stitches, put on a few patches and fix up generally. Possibly they would feel obliged to do a whole day's washing and a week's bleaching before renewing their walk to the sanctuary. Fortunately for the outward prosperity of churches, the robes of the heart are not as conspicuous as one's coat collar or one's bonnet strings. Still, every one knows just how one's self is spiritually dressed, and self commendation or condemnation ought to be quite sufficient to decide one's comfort or discomfort.

It is to be feared that some people succeed, in a measure, in concealing themselves from themselves. They do not desire to look fairly, deliberately and steadily at their own souls. "I never did like that last child of mine," exclaimed a negro woman, pointing to a little fellow who was almost white, "he shows dirt too easy." It is a sad day when one comes to dislike his own soul for a similar reason. Certain it is that God made it of the purest white.

There has recently been a strange demand among society people for antique articles—the older and uglier the better. A merchant in Paris, finding that the demand was greater than his supply, started a factory and engaged in the thriving business of making modern things look ancient. The more cracked and battered and damaged he could cause a vase to appear, the more money he could obtain for it. A strange enterprise! Where is there anything resembling it? Here, at home and everywhere. What are the saloons doing? Taking human nature as God made it, fresh, bright and beautiful, and causing it to look old before its time. Intemperance, dissipation and vice make sad havoc of the divine vase, in which are the gifts of heaven.

So much for the immediate effects of sin. Is it strange that superficial judges should have believed and taught that the consequences of wrong-doing can never be eradicated? The strange thing is that since wrong-doing is so calamitous, it has not been made the real object of attack by all good Christians. Instead of this, all the stress has been given to belief and profession. Good moral men have been often told from the pulpit that their morality would count for nothing, and worse than nothing, at the judgment day, unless accompanied by a certificate from an evangelical church.

The muddiest stream which earth affords needs only sufficient distance to become clear water. The river of each human life stretches into eternity. The channel is divine on either side, while the bright sun of heaven never ceases to exert its purifying influence. Say not that forever and forever a stream may flow o'er the rocks of eternal truth without losing the ships, some frail and others the stoutest that diabolical ingenuity could invent, which today it carries upon its surface.

Sin is endowed with fearful power and remarkable longevity, but the one thing with which by no possibility it can be endowed is eternal life. He who proclaims, "I, the Lord, create evil," puts none of himself into it. It came. It must go. It was not in the beginning. It shall not be in the end.

If a man looks into past eternity and declares that evil is as old as God, he is called a heretic, an infidel or a blasphemer; but if he looks into the future and declares that evil *shall endure* as long as God, he is called a good, Orthodox Christian. Strange, is it not, that the mere turning around to look the other way should produce such a wonderful change in one's theological status?

If we believe in Christ at all, let us believe in Christly conclusions. When the good Lord had said "Come, now, and let us reason together," he immediately added: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

And the poet replied:

"Though dark our present prospects be,  
And sorrows 'round us dwell,  
Yet hope doth whisper to the soul  
That all shall issue well."

Again Jehovah spoke: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and



shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear, surely shall say, 'In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.' "

And the poet answered :

"So at the loom of life we weave  
Our separate shreds, that varying fall,  
Some stained, some fair; and passing, leave  
To God the gathering up of all,  
In that full pattern, wherein man  
Works blindly out the eternal plan."

The holy prophet gave this assurance: "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

While the songster chanted :

"Thy ways, O Lord, with wise design,  
Are framed upon thy throne above,  
And every dark and bending line  
Meets in the centre of thy love.  
  
With feeble light and half obscure,  
Poor mortals thine arrangements view;  
Not knowing that the least are sure,  
And the mysterious just and true."

Then the voice of the seer rang out upon the midnight of evil: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear."

To which the full chorus of earth's muses gave sweet response :

"Dear are all the hopes we cherish,  
All the memories we keep;  
Joy and sorrow are twin-sisters;  
We are happy while we weep.  
Almost there, we still draw nearer,  
Thought and prayer and hope are free,  
They shall triumph as God liveth,—  
Every 'might have been' *shall be!*"



CHRIST.



# CHRIST.

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Know ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you?

—2nd Cor. xiii:5.

The Bible presents Christ to us, sometimes as an historical person, and again, as an eternal impersonality, representing truth, love and righteousness. It is clearly in this latter sense that he is employed in the text. That Christ, as a person, could be in all his followers is too absurd for a moment's consideration.

Wherever in the wide world two or three of his disciples are met together, there is the impersonal Word, or Logos, which was in the beginning with God, and by which all things were made. When it is said that "Christ is head over all things to the church, which is his body," we must entirely forget his personality and remember only the system of eternal principles which it is the duty of the church to maintain; for that the church is literally the body of Christ no sane person could believe.

Again, when Jesus asks us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, he has reference not to himself, but to the eternal facts and truths by which souls are nourished.

The historical Christ was human. The essential Christ is divine. Christ as a Saviour is impersonal. No person can save another person, although any person may assist another to work out his own salvation.

If we pray in Christ's name it should be in that of the impersonal Christ; and if we ask to be saved for his sake, the same principle should apply. Truth—the truth which Jesus taught—is as much more important than

Jesus himself, as he was of more importance than a grain of sand.

The history of Christ as a person is—simply history. Men have had no more occasion for the use of miraculous intervention in writing biographies, than for keeping their commercial accounts. It is a queer supposition that the Almighty once attended to the recording of births, marriages and deaths, as well as the journeyings, sayings and doings of a few persons, while ever since then he has left mankind to write its own most important documents, even its religious creeds—and what a muss has been made of it.

The history and chronology of the Bible are as human as its grammar and rhetoric. All these branches are taught in the common schools at cheap rates. Dr. Adam Clarke candidly says: "Saint Matthew took up the genealogies just as he found them in the public Jewish records, which, though they were in the main correct, yet were deficient in many particulars." Perhaps the miraculous conception of Jesus is one of the "many particulars" in which the writers of the Bible have manifested their fallibility. Certain it is that this wonderful story has the same color and tone as that which characterizes much of ancient literature. All great men of the old Gentile world were sons of the gods. Isaac Wise, the Christian historian, says: "There is no great man in history whose birth is not surrounded with most extravagant stories, announcing to the world that a great event has taken place."

Julius Cæsar learned when young and always believed that he was the descendant of Anchises and Venus. Jupiter had no human father. According to tradition Elijah had no earthly parentage. Saint Paul describes Melchizedek as "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end

of life, but made like unto the Son of God." Theologians have applied common sense interpretations to Paul's language, in order that there might be only *one* Miraculous Conception.

Jesus himself seems not to have made his origin a matter of sufficient consequence to mention, while his mother, speaking to him of herself and Joseph, says: "Behold, thy *father* and I have sought thee sorrowing." In several instances, Jesus is spoken of as the son of Joseph, but he does not seem to regard the mistake, if it be one, as requiring any correction. Another strange inconsistency consists in giving the genealogy of Christ through Joseph, and leaving that of Mary unmentioned. It would look as though Joseph received much more favor in his day and generation than he has ever received since. True, he himself had a dream, touching the miraculous origin of Jesus; but perhaps Ecclesiasticus is as good authority on this subject as any one. He says: "Whoso regardeth dreams is like him that catcheth at a shadow and followeth after the wind."

It is enough for all the demands of faith to say that the Christ-principle had no human origin. The essential Christ is the son of God. The true title of the historical Jesus, that which he gives himself, is, Son of Man. Undoubtedly the Christ-principle has been recognized, more or less, in all ages and in all nations. Christna, the demigod, or Christ, of the Hindoos, whose advent is estimated by Sir William Jones at 900 years before Christ, has a history somewhat like that of our own Christ, especially as to the miraculous conception.

We proceed, therefore, to regard Christ as a man, whom it behooved in all things, "to be made like unto his brethren." This is the Bible view. Even in the great work of bringing life and immortality to light he

is human: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."

As a miracle-worker, he is also man: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which *God did* by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know."

As a mediator, he holds his place in the ranks of mankind: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus."

As a judge, he is simply human; God hath "appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that *man* whom he hath ordained."

The difference between him and ourselves is one of degree, not kind; for "when he shall appear we shall be like unto him." "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

The relationship which he sustained to his Father is the same as that which may exist between God and other men. For he says: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one *as we are*."

"Yes," it will be said, "Christ was a man, but he was also God." Preposterous! In the primitive Christian church, no such claim was asserted, while many, including the Carpocrations, Ebionites and Cerinthians, taught that the birth of Christ did not differ from that of other human beings; while such popular fathers as Eusebius, Justin and Tertullian declare that it is absurd to imagine the uncreated and unchangeable nature of Almighty God taking the form of a man.

Jesus himself is sufficiently clear in his refusal to appropriate the title and office of God. When he says: "I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught



me, I speak these things," he disclaims all principalship. When he says: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there," he disclaims omnipresence. In saying: "Of mine own self I can do nothing" he disclaims omnipotence. In counseling: "Call not thou me good; there is none good but one, that is God," he disclaims spiritual perfection. In declaring: "My Father is greater than I," he disclaims divine equality. In a word, he says the very things concerning himself, which others have since said about him, and for the saying of which have been burned at the stake by Orthodox Christians.

In these days there is a kind of liberal evangelicalism, which is nothing but a cross between Calvinism, or Arminianism, and a what-is-it, a compromise which dishonors both its parents, which seems to regard Christ as neither one thing nor another. Ask it to sing the hymn of good old Dr. Watts:

"Well might the sun in darkness hide  
And shut his glories in;  
When God the Mighty Maker died,  
For man, the creature's, sin;—

and it complains that it has forgotten the tune. Even when

"I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my all in all,"—

is called for, this liberal Orthodox hybrid complains of a cold in the head, or a soreness in the throat which necessitates keeping the mouth shut. On the other hand, this mongrel offspring of musty creed and modern thought refuses to sing with Lowe:

"They may be right who say 'tis best  
To let the mystic Jesus rest,  
The Jesus whom men deified,  
The God who wept and bled and died;

But him, our gracious human friend,  
We'll keep till time itself shall end;  
That sacred and beloved face  
Shall never vanish from our race."

But better things are to be expected of our Orthodox neighbors as soon as they pass the somewhat perilous and exceedingly trying period of their metamorphosis. This successfully accomplished, they will find in Christ's humanity, assisted, as it was, by the spirit of God, even as any humanity may be assisted, all that is necessary for their daily comfort and final deliverance. The claim of Jesus is that he was sanctified of God. What higher claim is needed in explaining all that Christ was and all that he did? Let any man so live as to be sanctified of God, and he need not be God in order to live a godly life. How much encouragement there is in the thought that "all may do what has by man been done." If Jesus was not only a man, but something besides, it is useless for us to try to imitate him. Indeed, we lose our respect for him just in proportion as he is presented to us as an indefinite quantity or an indefinable quality. We can admire a beautiful fish and love a noble woman, but the moment the two are united in the form of a mermaid, the result is repulsive to our finer taste and better nature. A Christ classified is a Christ comprehensible.

We can easily understand why the believers in the total depravity of man have been anxious to set Christ above humanity; but are there not good Christians to-day in all denominations who are convinced that in every man there is a divine portion? What can be better in kind than this divine portion? Was it possible for Jesus himself to have had anything superior?

Emerson said a good thing: "I am glad to hear each sect complain that they do not now hold the opinions

they are charged with. The earth moves and the mind opens. I am glad to believe society contains a class of humble souls, who enjoy the luxury of a religion that does not degrade; who think it the highest worship to expect of Heaven the most and best; who do not wonder that there was a Christ, but that there were not a thousand; who have conceived an infinite hope for mankind; who believe that the history of Jesus is the history of every man, written large."

No man, when truly himself, ever rejected the real Christ. Men have rejected the history, creed or opinion which claimed to set forth Christ, and this they had, and still have, a perfect right to do. We do not forget that the Bible speaks of him repeatedly as the Son of God, and that

"There is a question for all below,  
Mighty in import for weal or woe;  
Question for childhood on bended knee,  
Question of faith and futurity.  
Answer it, ere thou shalt feel the rod,—  
'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?'"

Certainly, we reply; but what has this belief to do with the deity of Jesus? What has it to do with the doctrine of the Trinity, which is not a Christian doctrine at all, having been anciently promulgated, in one form or another, in Persia, Hindoostan, Egypt, Greece, Japan, China, and among some of our American aborigines? But what does it mean where Christ is mentioned as God's only begotten son? It means that rhetoric itself seeks to do him honor. The title is one of respect rather than description. Ephraim is called God's first-born. David is mentioned as God's begotten son. In respect to these persons, reason is allowed to explain language; but when it comes to Christ, words are sup-

posed to be greater than reason, so that Michael Wigglesworth is neither the first nor last to say:

"I am a fool,  
And have ventured  
To play the fool this once for Christ,  
The more his fame to spread."

The fact is, the exaggerated literature of commercial advertising seems to have been adopted by the advocates of him who was the very personification of humility. Not the truest, but the largest statements have been most popular. We must go to unevangelical authors for the most genuine sincerity. It does us more good to hear Thomas Paine say that "the morality which Christ taught has not been exceeded by any," than to hear the entire Young Men's Christian Association declare that they believe Christ could make a mountain walk into the sea.

But how can he be our judge, it will be asked, unless he is super-human? He is our judge by comparison. When Plato puts his verses beside those of Homer, his own production is condemned and rejected. It is said that where the electric light has been introduced, the consumption of gas is increased rather than diminished; the explanation being that the flame of electricity is so much more brilliant than that of gas, that the latter pales by comparison to such an extent as to give rise to a demand for more jets.

Thus, the Light of the World becomes the high standard by which we judge all the lesser lights in the kingdom of morals. Christ, instead of God, occupies the seat of judgment, because we compare like with like, finite with finite. Painting is judged by painting, not by singing, ploughing or running. The merits or demerits of anything are known to us only by placing things of like nature and possibilities in juxtaposition.

How pained my evangelical brother will be at the very thought of having Christ brought down to the level of common man. But hold! That is not the thought to be for one moment entertained. But this is it: The common man may rise to the level of Christ. *Venus de Medici* may be the best piece of statuary ever executed; but, because it is statuary and nothing more, every sculptor in the world may hope to equal it. Jenny Lind's bird song may be the finest production in music; but because it is not super-human, the field is left open to all competitors. So, Jesus is possessed of a very large spirit, but that which is peculiar to him as an individual, must be sought for in the word "large," not in the word "spirit." The moment you remove him from the grasp of man's possible attainments, you have robbed the world of its best friend. With this robbery the self-styled Orthodox churches are justly chargeable. Not the Unitarians, but the Trinitarians, have denied the real Savior.

Christianity can never be overestimated, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The only reason why the name of Christ is always employed in the Bible instead of that of Christianity, is that when the Scriptures were written there was no such word as Christianity. It stands to reason that it is through Christianity, not through a name, which, in reality, is only a combination of human letters, that we are saved. How plainly is this set forth in Christ's own words: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." In other words, it is not the name of Christ but the practice of Christianity that rescues the soul from evil.

The world has had quite enough of Christology, but



altogether too little of Christianity. The one is impracticable, the other practicable. A moment's examination of Christology—that is, the doctrines concerning a personal Christ—is sufficient to show that the whole system rests on a falsehood. It starts with the assumption that Adam's sin incurred infinite wrath, and merited infinite penalty. Whatever followed that false premise had to partake of the character of the premise itself. Logically, nothing could satisfy infinite justice but the sufferings of an infinite being. Logically, it was either necessary to abandon the Garden of Eden allegory or to put in the claim that Christ is God. In these latter days the Garden of Eden story has been essentially abandoned, while the belief in a God-Christ goes on by mere force of momentum. It should occur to all thoughtful men that inasmuch as the narrow plank of Adam's fall and consequent total depravity has nearly crumbled to pieces, it is about time to take down the top-heavy structure which is built thereon.

What is the modern idea of the sin of our first parents? That it was perfectly natural. What then is needed but natural remedies? Why should Jesus be other than a natural being? What occasion is there for his occupying a position of unique exclusiveness, and belonging to no particular class, species, or family, either human or divine? Is God's glory enhanced by supposing that an unlooked-for emergency arose only a few days after he had pronounced all his works "very good," and that there was no way out of the difficulty but to provide a system of miracles in which everybody must believe, in order to be saved? Must we apply to the moral world the queer philosophy of the student in *Les Misérables*, who argues that the rat is one of God's mistakes, to correct which the cat was made?



Christology has robbed God of his spotless and ineffable robes, in order that Jesus might be the more extravagantly adorned. Millions have died giving all glory to Christ, reposing all faith in him, while the universal Father was honored with scarcely a passing thought. If God was praised or thanked at all, it was only for his "unspeakable goodness in sending his Only Begotten Son into the world." A very doubtful compliment to the Most High! Christology presents its Lord in so much better light than that in which theology presents the Almighty, that I do not wonder that the great world has turned from the angry frown of the one to the kindly smile of the other. But let us return unto God and humbly crave his pardon for ever having been persuaded to think ill of him. We have wronged his infinite goodness.

To some extent, the Christology of popular acceptance is positively demoralizing. It assumes that Christ pays the sinner's just debt. What would be the effect on a city government if it could depend on the state to pay all the debts which the board of aldermen might contract, the only condition being that the board should believe in the state? Yea, in order to make it a parallel case, we must suppose that the city is made to think that all the debts which it may have contracted, or may yet contract, are already provided for by the state, on the condition before mentioned. "You may keep the change," remarked the attorney who had been fined two dollars for abusing the court, as he handed the clerk a ten dollar bill. "I shall probably have occasion to swear at the judge again." The privilege of profanity having been thus paid for, it was no doubt exercised to the full extent. In the interest of good morals it should be distinctly understood that Christ is, in no sense, another person's debt-

payer. He never once mentioned Adam, and it is not likely, therefore, that he regarded himself as the "receiver" of Adam's bankrupt stock.

Salvation rests upon no one's personal merit except one's own. The rules which are designed to govern our civil service reform, are quite likely to prove impracticable in the administration of the nation, yet, nevertheless, they are the eternal rules to which the moral universe must submit. If a democrat is not entitled to a post-office on the ground that a democrat has been elected to the presidential chair, neither is a man entitled to salvation for having advocated the cause of a personal Christ. Is the democrat *worthy*? Will he make a *good* officeholder? Is the follower of Christ *worthy*, in and of himself, to grace the walks of Heaven? Even as civil service reform would prefer a capable and trustworthy man of opposite politics, to an incapable and unfit man who might have the same politics as the administration, so the government of the spiritual world will save an honest heathen or unbeliever much sooner than it will an unfaithful Christian, however firm may be the latter's belief in Christology.

Another consideration, generally overlooked, is that if Christ was God, or more than man, he is not entitled to as much credit for his noble life as should otherwise be given. If he be the infinite God, his experiences on earth, so far as recorded in the New Testament, shrink into comparatively insignificant proportions. History reveals to us only three years of active ministry, covering not one tenth part of his earthly existence. Aside from the short sermon on the mount and the very brief model prayer, how little of his preaching or praying has come down to us. A few scraps of conversation and some scattered fragmentary incidents are all that have

been preserved. Even his "miracles" have disappeared from the latest version of the New Testament, and a small number of signs and wonders are all that are left. What a meagre record for a God-man. True, according to the extravagant fancy of John, the world itself could not contain the books that should record all that the Savior said and did, but it is fair to presume that what has *not* been preserved was not deemed essential to the needs of mankind.

Yet enough, and more than enough, has come down to us to reflect undying honor on Jesus Christ as a man. If what he did was the work of a God, we can only say, as so many did when the late Mr. Vanderbilt gave half a million dollars to a benevolent purpose, "It is nothing for him, he can amply afford it." According to Christ's own rule, no gift which comes from superabundant wealth is deserving of any respect as compared with the widow's mite. By this rule we estimate the merit of Christ himself. If he was only a man, he is deserving of our eternal gratitude for having revealed to us the possibilities of the human soul. If he was more than a man, we have no means of judging whether he did his best or not. With the poets we can join in saying :

"Was Christ a man like us?  
Ah, let us try if we then, too,  
Can be such men as he."

"Ye different sects who all declare,  
Lo! Christ is here, and Christ is there,  
Your stronger proofs divinely give,  
And show me where the Christians live."

"From science and creed the light goes out,  
The saintly fact survives,  
The blessed Master none can doubt,  
Revealed in saintly lives."

When Christ is thus generally regarded, it will be

impossible for any one to join with Voltaire in exclaiming: "I pray you let me never hear that man's name again." Wherever the name is rightly employed, such bitterness of heart can never result. When a good name becomes associated with horrible doctrines it must suffer accordingly, for, like people, it is known by the company it keeps. In this respect, even the name of Christ has not been spared, as may be illustrated by a little incident. A "smart" boy was boasting what he would do to another boy who had wronged him. "You must be like Christ," said the Trinitarian father; "he never did any harm to his enemies." "Yes, but he's going to," answered the wrathful boy. How did the pious parent meet that point? By embarrassing silence, I suppose.

After all, Christology is but the aurora borealis of a winter's night, while Christianity is the sun that warms, beautifies and fructifies the earth.

In Florence there is a painting by Angiolo Bronzino, which represents Christ as having descended into hell. The condemned by whom he is surrounded wear a countenance indicative of hope and joy. One little child is just stretching out his hand to another who is lower down. How true to life! Christ—the Christ spirit—daily descends into hell, and the evidence of his presence is always the same,—one person helping another, the banishment of despair and the assertion of hope.

Christ is the light of the world; but let us not misapprehend this truth. Suppose I were to invite you into a wonderful cave where all the gems of earth might be seen in glorious perfection. What folly it would be, if, when there, you should spend all your time in admiring the light by which the treasure is revealed, and pay very little attention to the treasure itself.

CHRISTIANITY.





## CHRISTIANITY.

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And there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.  
—Nehemiah iv:10.

Spiritual Christianity is older than the Son of David, and broader than historical Christendom. So far as it is of God, it is the universal religion. If any creed undertakes to confine it within arbitrary bonds, we have only to say to that creed, "Hold! You were born yesterday, and are nothing but a swaddling infant in the great arms of Father Time." "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," whether he was born today or ten thousand years ago, and whether he hails from Jerusalem or from Honolulu. True, there is no perfect Christianity in heathen countries; neither is there any which is perfect in our own country. The difference is one of degree; and so it will always remain until "that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." It is not one person alone, but all humanity which declares: "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Pagans are humanity's children. Christianity loves children. "God reigneth over the heathen," says the Psalmist. If that be so, the heathen are already under Christian rule, and fortunately need not wait for our churches to take up a collection and send a missionary to them. It is a favorite expression with many that God was in Christ. Let us turn it around and see if it is not as long one way as the other. Christ is in God. God's whole nature is imbued with

Christianity; how, then, can he "reign over the heathen," or any other people, without bringing them in contact with Christian influences? Hence we find, just what we would naturally expect to find, that there are people in this world, who, never having heard of Christ, have somehow become largely possessed of his blessed doctrines.

If we can instruct Pagans, we are merely paying them back some of the things which we received from them in ancient times. In coming from Egypt, the children of Israel brought with them considerable Egyptian morality. The Old Testament abounds with it. Even the ten commandments are not original with Moses. Why should this statement grate harshly upon Christian ears? If the Egyptians were descendants of Noah, and if Noah communed with God, why should not Noah's posterity know something about the divine will and pleasure? Why are we so jealous of Ham and Japheth as to insist that Shem was the only one in Noah's family whose descendants received any favor from Jehovah?

After a while, the children of Israel were carried captive to Babylon, where they came in contact with some more of Noah's descendants, and obtained some additional ideas which were afterwards added to Judaism. Finally, the whole system, gathered from all the world around, was employed as the foundation of Christianity. Then Paul began to mingle with Grecians, Athenians and Corinthians, until they, too, contributed through him to the general structure of the Christian religion. In due time, the Roman empire adopted Christianity, but not without coloring it with all the superstitions of mythology. When, at last, Rome was overrun by the savage hordes of the North, they brought

their own prejudices and convictions, and engrafted them upon Christian faith.

From what source has not Christianity drawn? It is a stream whose channel may be traced through Egyptian, Hebrew, Persian, Grecian, Roman, and Scandinavian fields of thought and worship. Historically considered therefore, Christianity is the most complete religion on earth. But not until we leave its history and regard it as the universal, spiritual religion, do we begin to know it in all its worth and glory.

Koeppen estimates the worshipers of Buddha at about one third the entire population of the globe. They largely outnumber the Christians. Is the Heavenly Father so indifferent to their spiritual interests as to depend on nothing but a few Christian missionaries to lead them into the paths of salvation? An Anglican clergyman, Mr. Baring Gould, bears witness that "the ethic code of Buddha can scarcely be ranked lower than that of Christianity." Must we Christians be so conceited as to suppose that, if any people in the wide world are in possession of any of God's truth, they must have got it directly or indirectly from Christ? He himself made no such claim. He was simply a "witness". Let no one suppose that this degrades him to an inferior office. The spirit which actuated him is eloquently described in the language of Mrs. M. C. Pratt:

"Oh, to stand foremost in truth's great ranks,  
And, with burning words, to move  
The hearts of nations to know the worth  
Of God's unchanging love!"

Max Muller gives us a valuable paragraph from that eminent father in the church, Saint Augustine, as follows: "That which is now called the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist,

from the planting of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion, which already subsisted, began to be called Christianity." What Robert Southey says is in direct line with this argument:

"Children we are all  
Of one great Father, in whatever clime  
His providence hath cast the seed of life,  
All tongues, all colours: neither after death  
Shall we be sorted into languages  
And tints—white, black, and tawny, Greek and Goth,  
Northmen, and offspring of hot Africa;  
The all-seeing Father—He in whom we live and move—  
He, the impartial judge of all, regards  
Nations, and hues, and dialects, alike;  
According to their works shall they be judged,  
When even-handed justice in the scale  
Their good and evil weighs."

If we Christians expect to be blessed while the heathen are counted out, we reckon without our host. The very expectation reveals as mean a streak within us as any that may be found among Pagans. There was once a narrow minded, pious man—such a combination frequently exists—who owned a slave in partnership with another man, and his prayer used to be that the good Lord would protect his half of the slave, Pompey. The Almighty could vouchsafe this partial protection without meddling with the other half of Pompey, just as well as he could save some Christian nations, while leaving the rest of humanity to go to destruction.

"Like warp and woof, all destinies  
Are woven fast,  
Linked in sympathy like the keys  
Of an organ vast.  
Pluck one thread, and the web ye mar,  
Break but one  
Of a thousand keys and the paining jar  
Through all will run."

“Nothing in this world is single,  
All things, by a law divine,  
In one another’s being mingle.”

“Mind cannot mind despise—it is itself.”

“All made in the likeness of the One,  
All children of one ransom,  
In whatever hour, in whatever part of the earth  
We draw this vital air.  
We are brothers; we are bound by one compact.”

The heathen are what they are, by the limitations of our Christian organizations, which, of course, reflects no discredit upon them, and should subject them to no condemnation. The word heathen, from heath, reminds us that the early church went only to the cities, and left out the heath, or country. That was a compliment to the country. God knew whom he could trust. Pagan has a similar origin. It comes from a word meaning villager. The small villages were not visited by Paul or his associates, and hence did not become organized into Christian flocks. How much divine wrath and human bitterness we have associated with these two words, which, after all, had a very respectable birth.

Why are we so slow in erecting the great temple of spiritual Christianity? Because “there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.” This rubbish consists of dogmatism, accusation, arraignment, superstition, bigotry, priestcraft, arrogance and hypocrisy, besides skepticism, animalism and materialism. That true Christianity has not been entirely buried and everlastingly lost sight of, is sufficient evidence of its fitness to everlastingly survive. Its enemies have been the world, the flesh and the creeds. Never yet has it been put to a good, square test on its merits alone. We have



been always dealing with its props—just as though an universal religion was in need of props. Why do we not try to put props under the sun to keep it from falling? Why not brace up the stars? What is all this dogmatism for, but an effort of theologians, fearfully and wonderfully made, to sustain something which, in its very nature, is indestructible? And the mischief of it is that the thing which is of eternal worth is frequently overlooked, while all energy is applied to sustaining the dogmatism. For example, baptism was once regarded as an aid to something; but afterwards it came to be looked at as the thing itself which was to save the soul. We cannot blame the world for finding something to laugh at in this despatch from Frankfort, Ky.: “At eleven o’clock this morning, thirty-three convicts, converted by evangelist Barnes, *with the requisite number of guards* armed with *Spencer rifles*, passed out of the penitentiary gate in two large wagons, destined for the wharf. Arriving there, Rev. Mr. Thorp, chaplain of the prison, administered to the convicts the rite of baptism.” Many a convict, because of his accepting the so-called *props* of Christianity, has been accounted a saint—and then hung; while the saints, who had somehow escaped being hung, joined heartily in singing the popular hymn:

“The blood is a fount  
Where the vilest may go,  
And wash till their souls  
Are whiter than snow.”

The singing finished, a portion of the Westminster profession of faith might be repeated, as follows: “The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal spirit, offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of his Father,



and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto him."

Dr. Adam Clarke, the Methodist commentator, might next be invited to give his views on the atonement. In commenting on Col. i: 14, he speaks of Christ as one "who has paid down the redemption price, even his own blood, that our sins might be cancelled." Bro. Moody might now be asked to give one of his stirring addresses—the one, for example, where this illustration occurs: "Eat of the Lamb. That is the food of the soul. So, my friends, if you want to know that you are saved, be sure you are behind the blood. Suppose I want to go to New York. I go down to the depot and buy my ticket. The conductor comes along and I hold out my ticket and he looks at it. He wouldn't care who I was, whether I was a black man or a white man. He just looks at the ticket. So God looks for our ticket. If we are behind the blood, let us show our colors and we are all right. \* \* \* Suppose I have been running up a bill at some store upon Washington street. And I go down there and say, 'I want to pay my bill,' and the shop-keeper says, 'Somebody has been here and paid your bill,' I am justified. The account is settled. I have nothing more to do with it."

Rev. E. P. Hammond, another evangelical revivalist, might continue the meeting by relating the story he has so often told, about the two children who lost their little white lamb and didn't know where to find it. At last, they traced it to a cruel butcher, who was about to take its life in spite of the agonizing grief of the children, when a benevolent gentleman appeared on the scene and purchased the lamb of the gruff butcher and returned it to its grateful owners. "Thus," says Mr. Hammond,

"Christ paid the price of our release and saved us by his blood." Nice theology! Of course the illustration wholly fails unless the mercenary and heartless butcher stands in the place of the Almighty.

At this point the pent-up emotions of the congregation might be relieved by a little more singing; for example:

"Nothing, either great or small,  
Nothing, sinner, no!  
Jesus did it—did it all,  
Long, long ago.  
Weary working, burdened one.  
Wherefore toil you so?  
Cease your doing, all was done  
Long, long ago."

The meeting might now be closed with prayer, and I can think of nothing more appropriate than an extract from President Finney's devotions: "O Lord, we so abominate ourselves that we could spit in our faces and kick ourselves into hell."

So much for the "rubbish" of Christianity. Let us return unto the Scriptures and see what they will tell us of its universal principles. Saint Paul was broader than all sectarianism, and higher than all dogmatism, when, with holy fervor, he uttered the noble words: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Life, not dogma, is the kind of Christianity which the gospel delights to emphasize. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him?" Is belief any particular virtue? "The devils also believe." When Christ

had summed up "all the law and all the prophets" and had hung them on just two commandments, belief was not mentioned as one of them. True Christianity, therefore, must show itself at the fingers' ends. "Yes," said the innocent small boy in answer to an inquiry, "my pa is a Christian, but he hasn't worked at it much lately." Little was he aware how large a part of mankind he was thus describing.

The elimination of the homely practicability of every-day life from the "scheme of salvation" has been productive of a whole harvest of evil consequences. Rev. Hyatt Smith says that he once received a letter exhorting him to be perfect, and that "the writer folded it into a newspaper, wrapped it so that the manuscript could not be seen, and then put a one-cent stamp on it. That man wrote six pages on 'sinless perfection,' and then cheated the government out of two cents." Perhaps he thought of the hymn already alluded to, and concluded that "Jesus paid it all."

In a church at Rome, opened every Christmas, there is the figure of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Christ. The little one is made of wax and adorned with rings of real gold and genuine jewels. To this place come pious devotees, and before this image repeat their solemn prayers. This is Christianity of a certain sort. Come with me to the Illinois state prison. It is after the great fire which devastated a large part of Chicago. A collection is taken up among the convicts for the sufferers, and a large and generous contribution is the result. This, too, is Christianity, but of another sort. Which is the truest type of the Master's teaching?

Another contrast: On the 26th of December of each year a certain church is opened to celebrate the death of the martyrs. A strong light is made to fall

upon the pictures which portray their death, and every feature is brought out in horrible detail. Turn now from this scene to another: It is that of a woman borne down by a multitude of cares. All day she answers to the call of duty; no neighbor is forgotten, no obligation neglected, and no amount of drudgery or hardship spurned. At night her sleep is banished and rest broken by the cry of a sick child. Patiently and lovingly she nurses it through the weary hours. What cordial is this she administers to it? Something the doctor has left? Ah, no, it is her very life. In the morning she rises with unstrung nerves and aching head to resume uncomplainingly, and perhaps without the inspiration of a sympathetic word or one look of encouragement, the too familiar round of oft-repeated labor. But one day she does not arise from her couch at the usual time. She feels so tired, she says, and must rest a little longer. Alas! it is a long, long rest. The messenger of Death speedily says, "Your work is finished."—

"Earth's but a sorry tent  
Pitched for a few frail days,  
A short-leased tenement.—"

Now follows a funeral assembly, some commonplace remarks, a brief prayer, the final leave-taking, the closing of the grave, a few flowers on the upheaved earth, a modest stone, and then—a world's forgetfulness. Yet in the sight of God here is a nobler martyr than any whose faces are on the walls of the sanctuary. Here was a Christianity that lived, loved, labored and suffered, and is now risen to the life everlasting. The ancient martyrs of ecclesiastical repute have been enormously overestimated. In some measure, they were simply obstinate and vainglorious. To satisfy a kind of theological ambition they were willing to commit suicide on condition that it should be done by the hands of an

executioner and called by a different name. There were hundreds of contemporaries with the martyrs who believed just as the martyrs did, but because they were peaceably inclined, reasonably tolerant and good tempered, nobody thought of killing them,—hence they are now unhonored on earth, but remembered in heaven. To live and bear burdens, to love and not complain, to be patient with our opponents, and to do our best with human nature as it is, requires more courage, and far more real Christianity than it would to follow the example of the ancient fire-eaters.

Titus Vespasian used to say that he would rather perish himself than to be the ruin of another. If he really meant what he said he was entitled to as beautiful a crown as any that martyrs ever wore, or that Christianity ever pictured. The selfish person's counterfeit affection, which may thus be expressed, "This man can be of use to me, therefore I will love him," has been too often given to Christ and called by the sacred name of Christianity. A poet once lost his soul in rapturous verse, all about a frog which made its home on a tiny island completely covered with beautiful flowers, and which could not be induced to forsake the spot. Now, in plain prose, this æsthetic reptile (I refer to the frog, not the poet) was attracted to the bower of blossoms, for the simple reason that he could catch more insects there than anywhere else. Are there any frogs in the Christian church? Do they seek its loveliness for loveliness' sake, or do they imagine that there are certain advantages to be obtained there which might not be so easy of access elsewhere? Eagles fly high, not that they may enjoy the most wholesome air that heaven affords, but that they may have the widest possible range for sighting their prey.

True Christianity seeks to cast out all degrading



selfishness from human nature. It offers no reward as an inducement for right-doing, other than nobility of soul. We should rid ourselves once for all of the sugar-plum theory of salvation. A mother says to her child, "If you will be a good boy during my absence I will bring you some candy." The boy endeavors to meet the requirements of the case by the smallest possible expenditure of virtue. Perhaps the mother threatens to visit him with pretty severe punishment in case he does not behave. His prayer will then be similar to the one which a little girl was heard to utter: "O Lord, make me a good child, not too good, but just good enough so that I won't have to be whipped."

What God says to every one of his children is essentially this: "Sweetmeats or no sweetmeats, *do right*: hell or no hell, shun the wrong." Whatever is added to this promotes an unworthy greed for rewards or a cowardly fear of punishment. I am very little concerned about what the future may have in store for me, but it concerns me much to know what I have in store for the future. There is an Oriental legend of a believer who was met one day bearing a torch in one hand and a pitcher of water in the other. On being questioned, he replied: "With this fire I go to burn up the palaces of heaven, and with this water to quench the flames of hell, so that men hereafter may worship God truly and no longer serve him for hope or for fear." That's Christianity.

If the word Christianity were to be lost, and we were compelled to find a substitute, where should we look for it? We might adopt the name of Christ as having the same meaning, thus following the example of the Gospel writers, but, as we have already seen, it is difficult in this practical age to employ a personal noun



for an impersonal thing without attaching personality to it, thus leading to confusion of ideas. There is absolutely no word in the language of man that is worthy for a single moment to take the place of Christianity. It has a depth of meaning, and a suggestiveness of blessed spirituality which no other term can fully express. It represents the final religion. It involves the conceptions of universal love, eternal progression and abiding usefulness. Under its banner he who is most useful is most illustrious. As an individual, no one is worth saving. It is only in relationship to the great brotherhood of man that he rises to importance. What is his value? What is his service? The two questions are one.

The human soul is not a cistern to be filled, but a living fountain to furnish supplies. The more freely it is used the more abundantly it is increased. All around it are the fields that need watering, but the fountain is all-sufficient because its sufficiency is not of itself, but of God.

Again, human life may be compared to a river. Some men represent the middle of the stream, which seems bent on nothing but to get to the ocean just as swiftly as possible. They are the theoretical Christians whose chief concern it is to save their souls and avoid friction. Other men represent the edges of the stream, which do the most practical good to the land through which the river flows. They are what the world needs—shore Christians who find their way to the very places where God's children live.

There are underground rivers. They, too, reach the ocean, but in the darkness and chill of unbroken night. How suggestive they are of those human lives

whose pathway is unmarked by aught of sunlight or beauty.

From the time of Adam until now it has been Heaven's effort to lift humanity up to a higher plane of existence. From now on, and until time itself shall be lost in the full light of eternity, every true Christian is called upon to join heartily in the same grand endeavor.

"Lift a little! do thy best!

Many they who need thine aid;

Many lying on the wayside,

'Neath misfortune's dreary shade;

Pass not by, like priest and Levite,

Heedless of thy fellow man,

But with heart and hand extended

Be the good Samaritan."

SELFHOOD.



## SELFHOOD.

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What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

—Psalms viii:4.

This important question is variously answered. Those who accept the Andover Creed must say, "I believe \* \* \* \* that by nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God." In the Shorter Catechism for Young Children (the shorter the better) this is the kind of pulp administered:

QUESTION: "What kind of a heart have you by nature?"

ANSWER: "A heart filled with all unrighteousness."

QUESTION: "Does your wicked heart make all your thoughts, words and actions sinful?"

ANSWER; "Yes; I do nothing but sin."

A Baptist catechism (no wonder the children cry for a kittychism) serves up the doctrine of its church in this style: "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." Bishop Beveridge says: "I cannot pray but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon but I sin; I cannot give an alms or receive the sacrament, but I sin." And I think the bishop is perfectly right about it, especially concerning his hearing and preaching sermons. It is certainly sinful to either hear or preach the kind of discourses which are based

on the bishop's theology. The Bishop of Toronto has this to say: "Every child of humanity, except the Virgin Mary, is from the first moment of conception, a child of wrath, hated by the blessed Trinity, belonging to Satan, and doomed to hell."

After reading a few pages of this sort, we are prepared to agree with Alfred Tennyson :

"There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

No one could more pointedly sum up the effect of the dogma under consideration than has been done by J. G. Holland :

"O faithfully did old parson Flynn  
Preach to his flock of original sin;  
And his flock took care to practice well  
The tenet which oft from the pulpit fell;  
And said, 'The least of all must know  
The fountain has a right to flow.' "

In turning from the heartless creeds of men to the soul-breathings of the poets, it is like coming suddenly from an ice-chest into the full glory of a summer garden.

Hear Robert Nicoll :

"God doth not man despise.  
He gives him soul, mind, heart, that living flame;  
Nurse it, and upwards let it brightly rise  
To heaven, from whence it came."

And James Russell Lowell :

"All that hath been majestic  
In life or death, since time began,  
Is native in the simple heart of all,  
The angel heart of man."

And John Fletcher :

"O man, thou image of the Maker's good,  
What can'st thou fear when breathed into thy blood  
His spirit is, that built thee? What dull sense  
Makes thee suspect, in need, that Providence?"



And William Byrd :

“My mind to me a kingdom is;  
Such perfect joy therein I find  
As far exceeds all earthly bliss  
That God or nature hath assigned.”

And Ella Caldwell :

“Judge not! Judge not! The erring heart,  
Though dimmed and stained by sin—  
Though lost to every good without—  
Has God’s pure light within.”

And John G. Whittier :

“Through all disguise, form, place or name,  
Beneath the flaunting robes of sin,  
Through poverty and squalid shame,  
Thou lookest on the man within.  
“On man, as man, retaining yet,  
How’er debased, and soiled, and dim,  
The crown upon his forehead set—  
The immortal gift of God to him.”

Here then, is the strong contrast between creeds and poetry. Both have attempted to answer the inquiry of the psalmist as recorded in our text. It will take but a moment to decide which set of answers bears closest resemblance to the spirit of Christ. Man is somewhat divine, and in fully realizing this, he will be inspired to nobler deeds and purer living. Too much stress cannot be given to selfhood. To think well of self is to honor the Author of self. We use the term selfhood, because it is a word rarely employed, and hence has not been subjected to so much abuse and misapplication as the word selfishness. Of true selfishness there is too little rather than too much in human nature. Everything desirable or undesirable may be discovered in one’s self. The day of judgment, the book of life, the recording angel and the great white throne, are all there. Heaven or hell is also there. It is there that sin is com-

mitted or virtue practiced, and it is there, and there only, that it will be dealt with.

Now the better we think of ourselves, the better opinions we shall have of God. Who can believe in the infinite wrath of the Almighty, while accepting the beautiful sentiment of Mrs. Barbauld :

“Is there not

A tongue in every star that talks with man,  
And woos him to be wise? nor woos in vain:  
This dead of midnight is the noon of thought,  
And wisdom mounts her zenith with the stars.  
At this still hour the self collected soul  
Turns inward, and beholds a stranger there  
Of high descent, and more than mortal rank;  
An embryo god, a spark of fire divine,  
Which must burn on for ages, when the sun  
(Fair transitory creature of a day)  
Has closed his golden age, and, wrapt in shades,  
Forgets his wonted journey through the east.”

And who can doubt the operation and final fruitage of God's love while joining with John Bowring in saying:

“There is, in every human heart.  
Some not completely barren part.  
Where seeds of love and truth might grow,  
And flowers of generous virtue blow;  
To plant, to watch, to water there,—  
This be our duty—this our care!”

Surely if it be man's duty to plant and water in the neglected human soul, it would ill become God to stand by and do nothing but curse that soul, either in time or in eternity!

The most weather-beaten vessel on the ocean cannot be legally seized as a wreck so long as any living animal may be found thereon. This is maritime law, but it illustrates good theology. Something alive may be discovered in the saddest wreck that drifts and tosses on

the great human sea. If it were not so, wherefore came the Gospel to sinners? Unless there is something in every man to which truth can successfully appeal, why does infinite wisdom waste time in making the attempt? The scheme of salvation, as set forth by evangelical churches, is one of the curiosities which will cause our posterity to smile. Here it is: First, every man in his natural state is spiritually dead. Second, in order to come to life he must take the medicine labeled "Faith in Christ." The picture of a dead man helping himself to medicine is really amusing. "Until you are converted," says the evangelical church, "you are utterly incapable of any good thing;" but in order to be rescued from this condition, you must *do the very good thing* of accepting the Holy Spirit and believing in the Savior. Let us put this remarkable theory into another picture: A man has fallen down stairs and broken both legs and both arms. At the head of the stairs stands a good fat doctor of divinity, solemn as an owl, and says to the poor cripple: "*Come here*, and I'll pick you up." Isn't it funny? The church which teaches such an inconsistency may well sing:

"And are we wretches still alive,  
And do we yet rebel?"

Unfortunately, yes; too many of you are still alive and are constantly participating in a wicked rebellion against what is divine in human nature. Be converted. Then can you sing the better song:

"In all there is an inner depth—  
A far-off secret way,  
Where through dim windows of the soul,  
God sends his smiling ray.  
In every human heart there is  
A faithful sounding chord,  
That may be struck unknown to us,  
By some sweet, loving word:

The wayward heart in vain may try,  
Its softer thoughts to hide,  
Some unexpected tone reveals  
It has its angel side."

Says George Gilfillan: "Our own soul is the urn which sprinkles beauty upon the universe." Do you object that this is transcendental, sentimental, visionary and impracticable? It is not. On the contrary, nothing could be more stubbornly practical. To believe fully in one's self is to occupy the vantage ground where one can move the world. It gives to one that necessary confidence which converts a comparatively uneducated man, like Saul of Tarsus, into a prominent factor in human progress. A French author happily remarks: "The great are great only because we are on our knees; let us rise."

It is estimated that there are six hundred million ganglion globules in the human brain. What a reservoir of lightning! What a fagot of thunderbolts! Suppose the entire six hundred million were fully equipped and under marching orders. What an irresistible army! How it could batter and demolish the strongest forts of evil! How rich we are in latent force! But alas, because it is simply latent, the world is none the richer for what we possess. We mourn the daily loss of earth's dynamic activity. Gladly would we fill Niagara's rushing torrent with water wheels, that we might convert its wasted power into electricity by which to light a continent. We would stud the mountains with windmills and rob the spendthrift tempest of its force that it might be hitched to our levers, wheels and spindles. We would arrest the mighty tides while they ebb and flow, so that the power which they are recklessly squandering could be utilized in our machine shops. Oh yes; we would gather up all of nature's fragments,

that nothing be lost, while the grandest force in creation, that which is generated of the six hundred million ganglion globules in the human brain, that which can be made to serve the best interest of the immortal soul, is largely unused or woefully misused.

Theodore Parker in one of his sermons describes an ancient temple in which there was a colossal statue of a man so large that, even as it sat crouching, its head reached to the roof of the temple, while its gigantic arms, as they lay folded by its side, touched the walls of the room. "Such," said he, "is the position of man in the churches of today. Were he to rise up the roof would be destroyed; were he to extend his massive arms, the walls of the temple would be demolished." "Better that he should remain as he is, then," will be the verdict of the pious, thoughtless thousands. Better that human reason should be loaded with chains and bolted to a granite floor than that the church in which our fathers obtained their comfort should have one stone removed! No; a thousand times, no. Man is greater by divine right than any church. In his actual practice, however, the meanest church on earth is too great for him. He limits himself to a narrow closet, while stately halls and endless corridors await the echoes of his tread and the music of his voice. He is like the wealthy woman who recently died. Having been an invalid for many years she had never visited one half the rooms in her palatial residence.

When you was a child your parents doled out your allowance of sugar, fruit, bread and milk, while it was the great desire of your heart to help yourself. Well, the time has come when you can help yourself. Do you appreciate the high privilege? God's table is always set, the feast is always spread, your place is always reserved,



and if you do not supply your soul with the choicest fruits of paradise, the fault is your own.

Great as man is by nature, he clings while he should stand. Women do not like to be called vines; but men also are vines. We lean against the damp wall of custom, both in social and religious life, until we almost take our death of cold. If the wall were to be suddenly taken away we should fall to the ground realizing our utter lack of self-dependence. Hammel is right: "An ounce of custom outweighs a ton of reason."

Because men have not depended on their own reason, they have often accepted other people's errors as gospel truth. They have read the Bible through other people's eyes. We should remember that when the Scriptures were prepared there was published no list of errata, such as we have in modern books, and of which this is frequently given as a specimen: "For dum squizzle, read permanent." Now if this "dum squizzle" had been found in the Old or New Testament instead of in a "profane" book, it would have been made into an article of faith by some sect or other, and many a man would have expected to save his soul by believing in it with unquestioning simplicity, Paul's "Prove all things," to the contrary notwithstanding.

Self-reliance is one of the cardinal virtues, admired by both God and man, and applied to religion as well as to other matters. Captain Miles Standish made a grave mistake in sending his friend, John Alden, to propose marriage for him to Miss Priscilla Mullens. Finding her a very comely girl, John Alden proposed for himself and was accepted. Evidently the girl disliked that dependent spirit of Standish which permitted courting by proxy. Why do men expect Heaven itself to be pleased when they do their spiritual love-making in the same



cowardly way? Why do they depend on the church to attend to their souls? Why do they ask for other people's prayers instead of honoring God with their own? Why do they ask of Bibles and creeds, "What is truth?" instead of consulting the God within themselves? Why do they lean where they should stand erect?

A Persian monarch wondered why men would tire themselves out dancing when they were rich enough to hire others to do it for them. So, too, men have wondered why they should think for themselves in matters of religion, while there are priests whose business it is to think for them. But mark this: the monarch could sit still and hire servants to dance *for* him, but he could not, even if he had owned the world, sit still and employ others to make a dancer *of* him. Neither can men be converted into Christians by depending on hired help, voluntary assistance, praying bands, or salvation armies.

"God's best and sweetest gift

Falls not in showers, as fall the dew and rain;

Ourselves to heaven's high gate we must uplift.

Heaven's light to gain."

And to these true words of Alice Cary, Mrs. Browning adds:

"Get leave to work:

In this world 'tis the best you get at all;

\* \* \* \* \*

Be sure 'tis better than what you work to get."

When the student covers his slate with long columns of figures, he is working for an answer to a problem. How insignificant a purpose! The problem itself is accomplishing the real answer by disciplining the student's mind. When, at last, every figure shall be erased, increased mental vigor alone will remain to signify that anything has been wrought. The world is a slate. Houses and lands, churches and dogmas are the figures which men and women employ in trying to solve

the problem of existence. Some day these figures will all have disappeared, when it will be discovered that they were nothing, while mind is everything. Thus the question of questions is aptly put by Owen Meredith:

“Not—how fared the soul through the trials she passed,  
But—what is the state of that soul at the last?”

“There is no royal road to geometry,” said Euclid to a king. Neither is there any royal road to heaven or to the best. Labor is religion. If it be God’s curse, it is sweeter than man’s benediction. Only as a soul moves is it visible. A meteor at rest would not be observed at any considerable distance; but, flying through the atmosphere, it lights up the whole landscape. It need be no larger than a grain of sand to be seen of men and pronounced a star. Why hug stoves or doctrines in which the fire, if there be any, may go out at any moment, when the true fire—that which the gods use upon their altars—is within you? For the most blessed warmth put your trust in manly exercise rather than in a theological furnace.

We are told that the force which holds together the elements in a drop of water would produce lightning if suddenly relieved. Try the experiment on blood. Let your veins flow with heaven’s own electric fluid.

In Japan, there is a law that any land unused for a year shall be forfeited to the public. Whenever anywhere one’s soul is unemployed, the same thing happens. The public takes possession of it and any charlatan is at liberty to write his name, creed, fancy, dream or nightmare thereon and call it gospel truth.

If one had nothing else to work for he could not do better than to work for work’s sake. Edward Young is right:

"Life's cares are comforts; such by heaven designed:

He that hath none must make them or be wretched.

Cares are employments; and without employ

The soul is on the rack, the rack of rest."

Even the Peace-Maker knew that there was no way to escape toil, conflict and struggle; "Think not," says he, "that I am come to send peace on earth, I am come not to send peace, but a sword." Life is warfare, warfare is discipline, discipline is spiritual perfection, and spiritual perfection is divine. The ladder of existence has no unnecessary steps; we must take them as they come, or remain low down.

Some persons are destined to carry heavy burdens from the cradle to the grave. The load was upon them when they were born. Still, destiny is kind. Roman soldiers while drilling were required to carry arms double the size of those employed in actual service. All the world is a drill-ground. We are to be made strong at whatever cost. If our training is severe, coming opportunity will be grand in proportion. If the soul ploughs deep, the final result will be found on the shining heights.

I remember a story that used to delight my youth. A father who had been a famous general in the army desired his little son to grow up and adopt the same profession, that he, too, might become a military hero and do valiant service for the cause of justice and liberty. On his death-bed the old soldier summoned his boy and said to him: "Some day I expect you to be a great soldier; but remember this, you will never win victories until you possess yourself of my sword—the one which I have wielded on many a battle field, and which has never known defeat." The boy was fired with enthusiasm. "Where is the sword?" said he. "I will lay it carefully away and keep it till I am old

enough and strong enough to go to the wars." "No," answered the dying man, "you must not have the weapon at present; I have secreted it beneath a certain rock in the forest; whenever, by your unaided strength, you can lift that rock and thereby obtain the sword, hasten to the battle field; then, and not till then, will you possess the charmed steel before which no guilty foe can stand." Shortly afterwards the father died, and the boy, burning with ambition, hastened to the forest, found the stone which his parent had described, and tried with all his might to lift it! Alas! it was too large for his feeble powers. Again and again he repeated the effort, but not a hair's breadth could the stone be stirred. Year followed year in quick succession, but the determined youth never, for a single day, forgot the enterprise which his dying father had left to him. At last his reward came. He had felt the stone tremble beneath his sinewy arm. By summoning all his strength of will and muscle, and concentrating it all upon one final effort, the ancient rock was rolled from its resting place and the prize revealed. What prize? Nothing was there but a rusted, ruined blade. The brow of the youth grew sad. "Why is it," thought he, "that my father made such strange provision for me? Surely there can be no charm in this corroded steel." Then he reflected in this wise: "But how strong I have become in all these years of persistent trial! I see it all now! The charm is not in the sword, but in the arm that has grown mighty in obtaining the sword."

What a lesson is this for human life! God places his numerous gifts beneath the rocks of trial and hardship in order that we may be properly developed. The things we seek are not worth the seeking, but the things we actually get while seeking are worth everything. It is because God places a very high estimate on man

that "he visits him every morning and tries him every moment." Why do we complain? Why are we not willing to accept the terms of existence? They are the best we shall ever have—the best any man, or angel, or archangel will ever obtain.

It does not follow because man is divinely good by nature that he will not allow his heaven-born soul to be buried in sin and corruption. Too frequently is this the case. A leaden gewgaw is carried in the same casket with the golden chain, until by contact with the baser metal, the gold loses its lustre and is denounced as spurious. Let us imitate the ermine. When its haunts have been covered with mud, it will submit to be captured rather than defile its fur by entering its accustomed resorts. The robes which clothe the soul should be guarded with equal care. Not to have on the wedding garment,—that is the greatest misfortune.

There is a beautiful Maylayan butterfly which has wings of purple and orange, but whose gorgeousness entirely disappears the moment it ceases its flight. Once the wings are closed, the sides which are exposed to view are exactly like the dead leaves on which the insect rests. Even the ugly appearance of fungi is closely imitated. How like the immortal spirit! In its flights of thought, imagination, aspiration and holy yearning, how beautiful! But the instant it becomes earth-bound, all its loveliness is folded away, while its aspect is that of the inferior objects on which it dwells.

In the city of Naples they showed me a mosaic table valued at a hundred thousand dollars. The angel faces which seemed to stand out in full relief from its unbroken surface were a delight to look upon. Suppose now that this precious work of art were to fall into the hands of an unappreciative housewife who should cover



it with a cheap cloth and keep it constantly loaded down with the family mending. That is the way we treat the immortal spirit within us. Unmindful of the angel faces which may be reflected from it, unmindful of the beauty of its workmanship, unmindful of its inestimable value, we cover it with the dull, heavy fabric of worldliness, while it is kept heavily laden with the thousand and one commodities of our what-not life. Not only do we thus conceal the finest pictures that the divine artist could make, but we hide even from our own view the very handwriting of God, in which he has set forth his eternal will and pleasure. Must we wait for death to clear off the rubbish from our inner selves, in order that, for the first time, we may acquaint ourselves with ourselves? If we will not befriend the God within us, death will do it for us.

“Oh weep not for the dead!

Rather, oh, rather give the tear

To those who darkly linger here,

When all besides are fled:

Weep for the spirit withering

In its cold, cheerless sorrowing:

Weep for the young and lovely one

That ruin darkly revels on;

But never be a tear-drop shed

For them, the pure enfranchised dead.”



BROTHERHOOD.



## BROTHERHOOD.

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Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?

—Malachi ii. : 10.

The ancient Jews did not always use the pronoun "our" in the same way that we who believe in the universal brotherhood of man are accustomed to employ it. They believed that they were a peculiar people, especially chosen of the Almighty to receive his blessings, while other nations either had no God or must content themselves with such inferior gods as imagination might invent. In their better moments, however, they caught glimpses of a larger hope, and seemed to hear the great Jehovah saying unto Abraham: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." They knew then that they were set apart to do certain things, fill a certain place in human history, not on their own account, but on account of the world. On the whole, the Jews were far less conceited, and much more willing to discover the true God outside of their own little circle, than certain Christian denominations have been which have more recently occupied the earth. According to these narrow-minded partialists,

"Heaven is the home of an Orthodox ring,  
Where a divine enigma reigns as king,  
Where white-washed souls from this mundane shore  
Shall sing hallelujah forevermore."

When I take up the New Testament and read these soul-stirring words: "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor

depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," "Oh, yes," says the Calvinist, "but the 'us' in this passage does not refer to mankind generally, but to *us* in particular, *us*, the elect." Again I read: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by *our* Lord Jesus Christ;" and the Calvinist is quick to inform me that "our" Lord Jesus Christ is not everybody's Lord Jesus Christ, by a good deal. With a little hope still left I venture to quote the parable of the lost sheep, that I may thereby show how saving love pursues the sinner through every avenue of danger, until he is rescued. "Yes, yes," cries the Calvinist, "but the lost sheep is a sheep, not a goat. *We* are the sheep. *We* shall be saved. Other people are goats." Then I refer to the words of Jesus: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." "One fold of *sheep*," answers the Calvinist. "*We* are sheep. Other people are goats." Almost disheartened, I turn the pages of the Gospel till I come to this: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." "That is applicable only to the redeemed," exclaims the Calvinist. "*We* are the redeemed. Other people will never have their tears wiped away, never cease dying, nor sorrowing, nor crying, and never be free from pain."

Calvinism, so far as relates to the doctrine of predestination and election, has found a vigorous opponent in Arminianism, which teaches that men are saved by the free and unlimited grace of God, operating upon such human hearts as are not too hardened to receive it.

But what better is Arminianism than the dogma which it combats? In the one case we have a God who could save everybody, but who won't, and in the other, a God who would save everybody, but who can't. The difference between an infinitely obstinate won't and an infinitely pitiable can't is not of sufficient practical importance to be allowed to rend the Christian world. The Arminians as well as the Calvinists are puffed up with conceit. If the one reads the grandest promises of the Gospel and unblushingly applies them all to "us, the elect," the other, with equal audacity, applies them to "us, the converted." Taking the evangelical churches as a whole, they would make us believe that the Gospel is addressed to the righteous, while poor miserable sinners haven't any Bible at all. It appears, therefore, from the logic of both great branches of Orthodoxy, that when Christ said that he came to save the lost, he didn't exactly mean what he said. Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism gives us any hope for more than a small portion of lost humanity. The one has no better success in this respect than the other. Each presents us with a little, narrow, contracted heaven, in which a mother would scarcely have room to toss her babe—and, it is feared, no babe to toss.

Now the fact is that the Bible, so far as it is divine, is sent, not to the church, not to Christians, not to any particular class, set or sect, but to all humanity. It is addressed to the most distant isles just as much as to us,—while if the heathen have any truth in their sacred books, that truth is addressed to us just as much as to them. The lines of distinction which separate the brotherhood of man into various grades and orders have simply an earthly origin. Universal Providence is no more governed by them than are the stars of heaven by the clouds that cover our land or sea.

You may have heard of the man who happened into a church one Sabbath during the communion service, and found himself in a place to which he was entirely unaccustomed. When the bread was passed to him, supposing he had luckily hit on a free dinner, he thanked the astonished deacon for his hospitality, and then fell to and devoured the entire contents of the plate. What more ridiculous is this than the figure which those Christians cut who appropriate the bread of eternal life to themselves, instead of tasting, and then passing it to their neighbors?

The practical utility of believing in the unlimited brotherhood of man cannot be overestimated. It makes the believer less selfish. Notice some of the prayers which are the legitimate production of partialistic views. I was acquainted with a very pious mother who at one time had a sick child. Now it happened that when the little girl began to improve in appetite, she asked for an egg on toast. There was not a good fresh egg in the house, and none to be had at any convenient market. But the mother believed in prayer just as firmly as she did that she herself was one of God's favorite saints; so she appealed to the Throne of Grace to send her a nice, new-laid egg for her invalid daughter. Pretty soon a neighbor's hen came over into that woman's wood-shed and laid an egg in a basket! The saintly woman regarded the event as a matter of course, cooked the egg, and thanked the Lord. After that, I suspect that whenever she asked the Lord to send her a fresh egg she slyly peeped out of the window to make sure that the wood-shed door was ajar. But how about the neighbor? True, he was not a church member, but had he no rights which the elect were bound to respect? The woman was perfectly satisfied to obtain the egg for herself, no



matter whether anybody else suffered for the want of it or not. Much of Christian prayer is equally mean and selfish. It leaves out of consideration the brotherhood. Even the Lord's prayer is converted into a machine for the promotion of home interests. "Our Father" is made to mean the Father of the set, sect, circle or family to which the suppliant belongs. "Give us this day our daily bread" is not used as a prayer for all mankind, whether the hungry children of earth are in India or New York, but as a special request that our own little selves—those who are actually present when the prayer is offered—be not overlooked by the providence of God. Such a prayer, based as it is on unworthy and unchristian limitarianism, and which addresses an impartial Father as though he could favor one of his children at the expense of another, never goes higher than the breath which accompanies it, and is never answered by the Most High.

Thanking God because we are better off than other people, because we first saw the light of day in a Christian land, and have received superior advantages, is almost equivalent to the prayer of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are;" and as concerns this matter, one could hardly throw a stone into a Christian congregation without hitting a Pharisee.

We shall make fewer mistakes in dealing with man when once the fact becomes permanently impressed upon the mind that the human race is literally a unit. It is an old fable that the gods, in the beginning, divided man into men, that he might be more useful to himself, and that essentially there is but one man. "What are we living for," cries Dorothea Brooke, "but to make life less difficult for each other?" It is true that no distinct dividing line can be discovered between the interest,

happiness and welfare of an individual, and the interest, happiness and welfare of all. Next to God, we live, move, and have our being, in humanity. Auerbach says: "We receive with our life the mind of centuries, and he who in truth becomes a human being is the whole humanity in himself." Saint Paul expresses about the same thought, and, with equal emphasis, acknowledges the universal unity of the brotherhood: "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not?" And this is a text which works both ways. Not only do we suffer in the sufferings of others, but rejoice in their rejoicings. Every true word spoken, every grand poem written, every beautiful song rendered, every noble deed wrought, let it come from whatever quarter of the globe, is as much our own word, poem, song, or deed, as though it had received its first awakening in our own mind. In God's moral universe there is no such thing as private property or individual monopoly.

"The tidal wave of deeper souls  
 Into our inmost being rolls  
 And lifts us unawares  
 Out of all meaner cares."

How many practical duties are suggested by this broad theory of unbroken and unbreakable brotherhood! "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak." Before we attempt to pull down another man's reputation, we should remember that his house joins ours, and that the wall between us is held in common.

Generosity as well as forbearance is a brotherhood virtue. Moses commanded the people always to remember their less fortunate brethren: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy

vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger." In field and garden, in kitchen and shop, in the market and on the play-ground, as well as in church or chapel, we should consider that all men are brethren. As every atom in earth or sea or sky has its certain influence on every other atom, so are mortals bound together by invisible chains, infinitely strong.

In ancient times serfs were employed as foot-stoves for rich men to warm their feet upon. Such conduct would be impossible where the truth concerning the universal brotherhood of man is fully recognized. Even a king would not care to thus degrade a man on whom he must look as his own brother—the equal of himself. "At a certain point," says Dumas, "the intoxication of a prince greatly resembles that of a rag-picker." And he might have added that at a certain point the honesty, virtue or goodness of a rag-picker greatly resembles that of a prince. In fact, there is no difference except it be that the righteousness which cometh up from humanity's damp and shadowy places shines with greater lustre in the face of Heaven than that which cometh from the more favored heights.

The religion which today should be emphasized is that of Altruism, as clearly taught by the Apostle, in these words: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." I once knew a man who expressed the wish that there would be a great war in Europe. On inquiring into the cause of this wicked desire on his part, I ascertained that he had a solitary cow to sell, and expected that she would bring a better price in case two or three kingdoms should be involved in bloodshed. What did that man more need than a clear conception of the universal brotherhood? Yet, after all, his case is not isolated. He stands forth

as a representative of nations. Secretly, if not openly, does commercial America rejoice when there is a prospect of a terrible outbreak of passion in Germany or Great Britain, which shall enhance the value of our commodities. On the principle that the all of one man is equal to the all of any other man, the poor man's cow was as much to him as the sugar of Louisiana, the cotton of Mississippi, the coal of Pennsylvania, the wheat of Minnesota, or the factory interest of Massachusetts is to her. So long as unmitigated selfishness characterizes our national policy, so long as each kingdom or republic looks upon every other kingdom or republic as an opponent, of whom to take advantage is the part of wisdom, what better can be expected of individuals? Before the world can become really a desirable place in which to dwell, the idea of the universal brotherhood must become international. No single state, republic or kingdom can for one moment be conscious of safety so long as any portion of the world is cursed by the plague of war, or is trembling with the fear of revolution.

If there be any manly satisfaction or pride in speaking of our town, our city, our state, or our country, then should there be still more satisfaction and pride in speaking of our humanity, our brotherhood.

"For a thousand million lives are his  
Who carries the world in his sympathies."

On one of the earliest coins of this country was stamped the much-praised motto, "Mind your own business." Such counsel reeks rank selfishness. It is neither Altruism, Christianity nor godliness. Many a poor child, or man, or woman, has died of want and despair, because the coin in the miser's pocket kept saying, "Mind your own business." Many an unfortunate victim of thoughtless sin and the world's neglect has



suffered a thousand deaths for want of a kindly word or sympathetic look. The man who went on his wedding tour, and left his wife at home, because, as he said, he had not money enough to pay the expenses of both, minded his own business with a vengeance. In India, the Christian converts must still have two tables at communion service, one for the high and one for the low, and each class is supposed to "mind its own business." It is evident that the aristocracy hasn't Christianity enough to divide between itself and the other party. Do we ever see anything resembling this in our home churches? Does ever a man or woman conduct himself or herself as though he or she belonged to the caste rather than to the brotherhood? Is ever a stranger, or a poor man or a poor woman allowed to attend religious services and leave the house of God unspoken to, because the regular members of the congregation attend strictly to their own business, or to that of their own set? True, the stranger may not be a very good person, or one very desirable to associate with, but will he or she be likely to become much better through the agency of our neglect or contempt? Christ gives one command which so staggers the majority of Christians that they almost regard it as one of his mistakes. He says, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and the context shows that he desires his disciples to cultivate the friendship of unrighteous people. Perhaps there is no advice which our churches more need.

The Gospel of the universal brotherhood is not only the Gospel of time, but the Gospel of eternity. It could have no force or virtue here upon earth, were it not equally applicable to our future state. In that, as well as in this, all grades and classes, from the highest

even to the lowest, will be united in common sympathy. The question of Whittier is pregnant with meaning:

"Can Heaven itself be heaven  
And look unmoved on hell?"

In this world such a condition of things could not prevail. When men are buried in a coal mine the whole country is saddened at the very thought. No one asks, were they good men or bad, but every one feels that nothing should be left undone toward rescuing them from their dreadful situation, whether dead or alive. Shall the redeemed in the holy Jerusalem be less thoughtful and more heartless? Will they content themselves in attending to their own business while some of their fellow beings are buried alive in a horrible sulphur mine? Could any soul joyfully accept a salvation which should represent only a ragged segment of a circle? If so, the distances from the center to the circumference of that soul could not properly be called magnificent.

"Place such a soul  
Within a small pipe's bowl,  
And with your thumb the larger part defend;  
In vain is all your care,  
You cannot keep it there,  
'Twill make a turnpike of the little end."

Almost identical with this doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man is that of love. So nearly are the two ideas related that if one fails the other cannot survive. Christ recognized this in all his teaching. Love was the word on which he laid all the stress of which his mighty soul was capable. In this connection, O. B. Frothingham has left us an eloquent paragraph: "Each prophet has his word of might. Buddha's word is renunciation, Zoroaster's is purity, Menu's is justice. The word of Confucius is moderation, the word of Moses is law, the word of Plato is harmony, the word of Socra-



tes is reason. Epictetus lays emphasis on self-reliance, Antonius lays stress on the peace of the firm and steadfast soul. What does Jesus speak? The word love. That is his contribution to the soul's vocabulary,—love. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love God, love man, love the poor, the weak, the wicked. 'Thy sins which are many are forgiven, for thou hast loved much,' is his sentence on the sinful woman. He introduces love into the bosom of the Hebrew Jehovah, and the stern eye fills with tears that drop in summer showers on the thirsty ground, and light up with smiles that are sunbeams, gladdening alike the just and the unjust. He introduces love into the conception of immortality and shows us the angels of little children always basking in the light of the Father's countenance. He introduces love into politics, and kings become ministers, and nobles servants. The neediest is lord. He introduces love into the social relations, and all men are brothers, have everything in common, live in peace. He introduces love into the heart, and there are but two emotions therein,—gratitude and trust."

In this doctrine of love—love sufficiently broad to cover all mankind—every consolation is to be sought and obtained. It is the one governing principle which succeeds where everything else fails. It is infinitely more precious than light or air, yet more common than either.—

"Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,  
And men below and saints above;  
For love is heaven, and heaven is love."

There is love enough in this fair universe for all our friends, and then there is enough, and to spare, for all our enemies.

"Why should I spend my precious time,  
Swift moments as they go,

In heaping contumely and spite  
 Upon my bitterest foe?  
 Why should I build a barricade  
 That e'en shall reach the sea.  
 Bristling with shafts of hate, between  
 Mine enemy and me?"

Mrs. Kidder may well ask why she or any man or any woman should be so out of harmony with the ruling principle of creation as to hate any one, but I wonder if it did not occur to the fair poetess to inquire how God can afford to build a barricade of infinite wrath,—not only as high as the sky, but from the bottom to the top of the universe, between his enemies and himself. If in man it is wrong to hate, it cannot be right in God. If there be a devil, let him hate, and let him have a complete monopoly of the business. It is the nature and occupation of the Infinite to love. It is man's nature also and should be his occupation.

"O, Love is higher than what thou lovest;  
 And though she may seem of earth,  
 And be named however thou most approve'st.  
 She is one, and of heavenly birth."

"Without love," says a French author, "it would be sad to be a man." He might have added that without love, it would be sadder yet to be a woman, and saddest of all to be a God. "The heart that had never loved," says some one, "was the first Atheist." No doubt of it. Love and faith go hand in hand. Coleridge is right:

"He prayeth well who loveth well  
 Both man, and bird, and beast.  
 He prayeth best who loveth best  
 All things both great and small:  
 For the dear God who loveth us,  
 He made and loveth all."

To love is an obligation which brings its own reward. Mythology ascribes the invention of wreaths to

Prometheus, who imitated with flowers the fetters he had worn by loving mankind. To love an enemy may be difficult, but it involves no such hardship as hating him. It is always easier to explain to ourselves why we should love than to find even a tolerable excuse for enmity. Our own faults and misfortunes may always remind us of the charity we should exercise toward others.—

“Each soul hath stemmed some fearful storm,  
Each heart is chafed with wasting scar;  
My life-boat wrecked in manhood’s morn,  
Now drifteth like a shooting star.

“But oh! I have not lost the power  
Of sympathy at sorrow’s call—  
For love inspires each fading hour,  
That love which feels—then gives to all.”

Love, rather than power, or law, is the perfect teacher and the sure reformer. I have seen dead leaves clinging to an oak tree throughout the entire winter. Not the angry winds of November, the drifting snows of December, the chilling blasts of January, the stinging frosts of February, or the ferocious tempests of March, could loosen their death-like grip upon the tree. But when spring came, with its quiet, balmy air and life-giving sunshine, when all was peaceful and quiet, those leaves fell one by one as though plucked by angel fingers. A new life had been developed in the tree, new leaves were starting, and the old and useless must depart. On theological branches there are many dead leaves. Not by the angry storms of controversy shall they be shaken from their places, but by surrounding the tree with that gentle atmosphere of love which shall bring forth the new and better thought.

“There is a weapon firmer set,  
And brighter than the bayonet,  
A weapon that comes down as still  
As snowflakes fall upon the sod,  
Yet executes the freeman’s will  
As lightning does the will of God.”

An eminent observer affirms that numerous microscopic beings, which in the shade remain vegetables, assume a higher character in the sun and become veritable animals. Whether this be so or not, it forcibly illustrates a very important fact in the moral world.

“In sunless place there spring apace

Things loathly, low and vile.

So heart bereft of love is left

To grow ill thoughts the while.”

Just in proportion as we love, we live. Not bread, but affection, ministers to the real want of our existence.

“I’m living where I’m loving.

I am not where I am.”

To love is to hate evil. No one can be false to the brotherhood who has learned the language of Christ. No one can sin whose love is complete.

“Higher than the perfect song

For which love longeth,

Is the tender fear of wrong

That never wrongeth.”

Finally, the world, and the heavens, and all which they contain, belong only to those who know how to love them. Title-deeds cannot confer ownership, church creeds cannot transfer truth from God to man, and religious profession does not prove possession, but,

“The world’s most royal heritage is his

Who most enjoys, most loves, and most forgives.”

# CONSOLATION.





## CONSOLATION.

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Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

—2 Cor. i. : 3-4.

Christianity is especially adapted to the afflicted, for if that which is designed to be comforting were taken out of the teaching of Christ, there would not be enough left to constitute a foundation for any system of religion. Yet, strange to say, the moment we leave the Gospel—which means good news—and inquire of the creeds of men, we shall never guess that consolation was the chief purpose of the blessed Master. As I have intimated in a previous discourse, we must turn away from ecclesiastical tenets, and hasten to the inspiring words of truth-born poesy if we would find the leaves whose balm is for the healing of the nations.

“For doth not song  
To the whole world belong!  
Is it not given wherever tears can fall,  
Wherever hearts can melt or bushes glow,  
Or mirth and sadness mingle as they flow,  
A heritage to all?”

And this is my apology, if one be needed, for asking the great company of muses to add their testimony to my own poor words, while I endeavor, at this hour, to comfort the sorrowing, give hope to the despondent,

faith to the doubting, consolation to the bereaved, and grander views concerning life and death to every one.

“These themes indeed  
The noblest are that can employ the soul.”

The philology of tribulation suggests the wisdom of those who gave us the word. It comes from the Latin *tribulum*, which was the threshing instrument or roller by which the Romans separated the wheat from the chaff.

“Till from the straw the flail the corn doth beat,  
Until the chaff be purged from the wheat,  
Yea, till the mill the grains in pieces tear,  
The richness of the flour will scarce appear.”

Every mountain of crucifixion is also the mountain of ascension. Extraordinary afflictions bring extraordinary graces.

“Lord, thou hast a holy purpose  
In each suffering we bear,  
In each throe of pain and terror,  
In each secret, silent tear.  
In the weary days of sickness,  
Famine, want and loneliness.  
In our night-time of bereavement.  
In our soul's Lent bitterness.”

How sometimes dark and heavy is the cloud over our head! But what is that beautiful sunset scene—the despair of every artist—toward which a million admiring eyes are turned, and on account of which a million holy emotions are born? It is that same sombre cloud, having drifted into a more favorable light. Thus it shall be with all our sorrows. Once give them the advantage of the bright sun of spiritual truth, and they will cease to exist as clouds, and be known only as golden chariots, filled to repletion with the royal gems of heaven.

“Then let us weep but not despair;  
For when the clouds of sorrow come,  
Heaven writes in rainbow colors there  
The promise of our better home.”

No person's loss was ever yet so great, that there was not something left. Make the most of that something, and lo, it proves to be everything. It is related of Paganini, the celebrated violinist, that on one occasion when he stood before an audience tuning his instrument preparatory to the performance, one string after another broke, until only one was left. The people laughed and sneered by turns, until the great musician began on the one remaining string and brought forth such sweet, inspiring music that every murmur was hushed, every ear ravished with the exquisite strains, and every eye moistened as each soul in the room seemed struggling to escape from its thralldom and to draw near to that wonderful musician who was speaking in the mother tongue of the inner life. The music of the spheres is within ourselves. All outward forms may disappear; we are still in possession of unspeakable wealth.

“Bless thy God—the heart is not  
An abandoned urn,  
Where all lonely and forgot.  
Dust and ashes mourn;  
Bless him that his mercy brings  
Joy from out its withered things.”

Has Death robbed you of some dear one? Seek not to console yourself with the thought that what is your loss is that one's gain; for this is the better faith, that what is that one's gain is also yours. If you have parted with an earthly friend you have secured a heavenly. Think not to quell your perturbed heart by forcing yourself to say, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” The Lord

gives, gives, gives. He never takes away, except to add to the blessing. He is not like a fickle child, that he should bestow a gift and then demand it again. Our dead are *ours* in the largest possible sense.

“Sweet souls around us, watch us still,  
Press nearer to our side;  
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,  
With gentle helping glide.”

“It is a beautiful belief  
That ever round our head  
Are hovering, on noiseless wing,  
The spirits of the dead.

“It is a beautiful belief,  
When ended our career,  
That it will be our ministry  
To watch o’er others here.”

Are you in trouble at the thought suggested by scheming creeds, that there is possibly a dreadful condition awaiting the unrepentant dead? Let the whole truth be told; tell it bravely to your own soul, and this is it: Sinfulness must be dealt with—for Love’s sake. Correction must be administered, but only by the hand of Love. Impurity must not forever dwell with purity. What then? Must a soul perish? No; impurity must perish. Love redeems. That is the whole Gospel. Death has no power to stay the proceedings of Love. “Probation” is a bugaboo. It has no place in Scripture or in reason. We are not on trial, as students declaim for prizes. The question is frequently asked: “Does probation end at death?” Yes; at the death of superstition. All that Love requires of us is to go on. At death the same old eternal song will resound in our ears: “Go on, go on!” We may have to unlearn much, undo much, and be sent back many times to deal anew with our neglected selves, but this is the worst that can happen. It is Love’s man-

agement, and even here the cry will not cease, "Go on, go on!" Fear not for the departed, however much they may have erred in their earthly life.

"Sin shall dissolve  
In goodness supernal,  
Beauty and joy  
Alone are eternal."

Heed not those who vainly talk of some needful and special preparation for death, some final breathings of repentance, some manifestation of divine acceptance. It was once my lot to be invited to the palace of one of earth's greatest potentates, that I might pay my respects to his name and fame. But there was a hitch in the proceedings. It was not convenient for me to be ushered into his august presence at the special hour mentioned in the invitation, and so I respectfully requested that the time might be postponed. Then I was coolly informed that in not complying with the strict letter and detail of the monarch's will and pleasure, I had offended his most excellent majesty, and henceforth could look to him for no favors whatsoever. This official pomp and ceremony may be needful in approaching earthly kings, but the strange thing is that our theologians should have pretended to discover the same fussiness, with all its vanity and childishness, in the courts of Heaven. All that the good Father says to his children is, "Come!" Men bother themselves to death in discussing the needless questions, How? When? Where? while from Heaven itself no response is heard except, "Come." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If we may properly compare God's reception of his children, whether they accept his call in this life or the next, to anything earthly, let us leave the



vulgar superficiality of courtly etiquette, and observe how a mother would receive her long-absent son. She has just heard that he is on his way home from the war. How her heart leaps to meet him! Fancy her making the inquiries, "In what manner does he come? By what route—the hill or the valley? By water or land? How is he dressed—like a civilian or soldier?" But let fancy go further. Picture her as replying, "Ah, then, if he comes through the valley, I will not allow him to approach. If he has not doffed his battle-stained uniform I will cause him to feel the bitterness of my wrath." Preposterous! This cannot possibly be a real mother whom we are portraying. No; neither is it our real Heavenly Father. To him we can always appeal for kindness. In him we can always find a true friend, whatever may be our condition.

"Forgive the thought that everlasting ill

To any can be part of thy design.

Finite, imperfect, erring, guilty—still

All souls, great God, are thine, and mercy thine."

As the government recognizes its own bonds by the shreds of hidden silk which were placed there when the paper was made, so, at last, will Heaven identify its own work, not by any outward marks, but by the threads of divinity which were left in every soul at its creation.

"Souls pure and strong from God still wing their flight

And dwell among us for a little space;

Whoso loves truth may in their beauty trace

The semblance of the everlasting light."

But it may be that I am addressing one who neither fears nor hopes concerning the hereafter, in whose mind the conception of immortality is wrapped in darkest doubt. Man not immortal? Then what is human life? A cheat from the beginning to the end; a ladder whose base is on earth and whose summit is in the everlasting



nowhere; a bridge whose beginning is on the hither shore, while its end is in the middle of the river; a field which is always ploughed and sown, ploughed and sown again and again, but never harvested; a book with wonderful preface, but no completion.

We came to the world with a cry—  
 We wept through our infantile days—  
 And now we do little but sigh  
 And ask if it's true that life pays.  
 If crying and sighing are all—  
 If this is the end of life's plan,  
 Love's rule is exceedingly small,  
 And earth's greatest failure is man.

If mind is destructible, then nothing in the universe is steadfast, nothing has come through from the start, nothing will go through to the end. But the soul rises in its majesty and proclaims itself related to the eternal.

“We bow our heads  
 At going out, and enter straight  
 Another golden chamber of the king's,  
 Larger than this we leave, and lovelier.”

In the high northern latitudes I have seen the twilight in the western sky, and then turned my face to the east only to behold that the golden dawn had already appeared. Thus it was when your loved one died. The light of this world had not yet faded ere the bright incoming of the new and endless day greeted the spirit gaze.

“There is a land mine eye hath seen,  
 In visions of enraptured thought,  
 So bright that all which spreads between  
 Is with its radiant glory fraught:—  
 A land upon whose blissful shore  
 There rests no shadow, falls no stain:  
 There those who meet shall part no more,  
 And those long parted meet again.”

Dear friend, I do not plead with you to have faith, for that you already richly possess. Every one has faith—it is God-given and universal—but it is not every one who brings it into exercise when it is most needed. Some allow it to remain hidden when its employment could lend cheer to the darkest night; and some have mixed it with so much which is not faith, but unworthy credulity, that they can derive from it no comfort whatever. “Can it be,” asked Michael Servetus of John Calvin, “that mere confusion of mind is to be deemed an adequate object of faith?” No; true faith is clearness of mind, and a necessity of man’s welfare. Prof Tyndall, in addressing the British Association, of which he was president, spoke as follows: “Man never has been and he never will be satisfied with the operations and products of the understanding alone; hence physical science cannot cover all the demands of his nature.”

“We have but faith, we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see.”

Let no one demand thy faith for mere priest-made theories or theological guesses. Faith is for those things, and for those only, which, in our inmost soul, we know ought to be true. Le Verrier weighed our planetary system in the balance and proclaimed that there *should be* another planet, and that it should be found at such a place in the heavens. He had not seen it, no man had seen it, but his scientific faith told him that what *should be*, is. And he was right, for when astronomers turned their telescopes toward the place he had pointed out, the star was discovered. Men *should live* hereafter in order to give explanation, beauty and finish to the present life. In spiritual concerns as in material, everything must be made to properly harmonize. Columbus sought not the land which he or his associates

had ever seen, but the land which he knew ought to exist, the land which his faith had already occupied. Thus do we seek the new and better country, and our faith should occupy a territory large enough for all the souls of the Old World to possess.

“Then courage, heart, have faith and watch and wait.

The loved and kindred, thither crossed before,

Are waving signals on the shining shore.”

Do you remind me that faith frequently misses its objective point? For example, in the discovery of America, Columbus did not find just what he was looking for—a new track to the Old World, or a wonderful island belonging to Asia—but an entirely new and strange country. Afterward how many came to these shores in search of Eldorado, The Fortunate Isles, the Garden of the Gods, The Fountain of Perpetual Youth, the Land of Beautiful Women, etc. Faith unfurled many a white sail on the raging sea, pointed many a bow toward unknown dangers, and populated vast regions of this New World. And the best of it is, that, essentially, this faith was based on the broad foundation of truth. Only as concerns trivial detail and insignificant circumstance did it miscarry. The Eldorado was actually found, and failed of recognition only because it was so much larger than the childish imaginations of the voyagers had pictured it. Are not the Fortunate Isles all about us? The Garden of the Gods is here. Behold the millions of young men and young women on whom the sun rises and sets and whose numbers never diminish, and tell me if this is not the Fountain of Perpetual Youth. Look at the fair daughters of men as they come and go, making all human endeavor joyous, and life itself a holy inspiration, and then confess that this indeed is the Land of Beautiful Women. So the faith of the vision-makers who succeeded Columbus

was wrong only in this, that it fell far short of the glorious reality which awaited the ripening years. So it shall be with our faith in the spiritual New World. No doubt much of the detail and circumstance, which our fancy has given to the hereafter, will fail to be realized, as indeed, for the glory of God and of men and of angels, it ought to fail. But it is only our childishness that will be disappointed. Our real Heaven will be as much larger than the mental picture we have drawn of it as the most distant visible sun is larger than the meteoric pebble that for a moment rushes into earth's atmosphere and receives the name of star. Let us hope to the utmost, pray for the best we can conceive of, and then believe that we shall get infinitely better than hope or prayer could now comprehend.

“Pray: though the gift you ask for  
May never comfort your fears.  
May never repay your pleading,  
Yet pray, and with hopeful tears:  
An answer, not that you long for,  
But divine, will come one day:  
Your eyes are too dim to see it.  
Yet strive, and wait, and pray.”

Faith is simply life's outlook. Go with me to a fine, large mansion, in front of which is a majestic river, and, in that distance which lends enchantment to the view, a mountain landscape. Earth affords no grander view. Yet, surprising as it may seem, the occupant of that house never lifts the curtains or opens the blinds of the front windows, but sits all day in a poorly furnished room which looks only into the back yard, where the winter's ashes, broken crockery and unseemly rubbish are thrown, while in the distance nothing presents itself but the moss-covered stones of an ancient grave-yard. Such is life without faith—a house all back-

look. How many are living thus! The mountain of Zion, the city of God, and the river of eternal life are at the front door, while naught but our broken years and the doleful cemetery of our dead hopes can be seen from the rear apartment in which we doom ourselves to live, and move, and have our being. How poor and mean is the best residence compared with the landscape that should occupy its foreground. What human being can really live within four walls? It is the great outside, filled with loveliness and light, in which the soul has its chief existence. This is life's outlook. This is faith.

“There be hours methinks when the spirit leaves

The footworn paths that it erst has trod.

And on a higher, purer plane

Holds closer converse with its God;

And when with clearer eyes we see,

His love the universe replete

And clouds of doubt and mystery

Like shackles break about our feet.

We may not always keep those heights,

The valley paths are full of pain:

The work He gives lies farther down,

‘Tis needful we return again;

And yet it sweetens every cup,

Which pityingly His hand has given,

That once our souls were lifted up

To purple hills that dream of heaven.”

In looking at the new moon, we frequently observe the dim outline of the larger portion, on which the sun is not shining. This, we are told, is the reflection of earth-light. How very feeble it is as compared with the brightness which comes from the king of the planets,—a king whose eye has never yet seen darkness. Yet this earth-light which our satellite so obscurely reveals, correctly symbolizes the comfort which any human soul may obtain from earthly sources. Why should one look downward for hope or consolation, when the great above



is so much larger, richer, fuller, and more glorious? Why should earth or earthly promises be deemed sufficient to satisfy our spirit's unutterable longing, when earth confesses its own poverty by depending for its very existence on the breath of the sun, warming itself by the touch of a higher life, and drinking in the full vigor of the starry constellations?

"So may my soul upon the wings  
Of faith unwearied rise,  
Till at the gate of heaven it sings,  
Midst light from paradise."

"But the one stubborn fact remains," says the mourner, "*my loved one is dead.*" "Yes," I reply, "but death is not terrible." Says Lucan: "The gods conceal from men the happiness of death that they may endure life;" and Young adds: "Death but entombs the body, life the soul." If this were a deathless world, how could we ever become spiritually minded? What would tempt us beyond animalism? What would ever give our vision an upward turn? What would prevent our eyes from growing downward?"

"Well blessed is he who has a dear one dead;  
A friend he has whose face will never change—  
A dear communion that will not grow strange.  
The anchor of a love is death."

Be comforted with the thought that your sorrow is working out for you a more abundant joy. When the waters of the Nile overflow its banks, many tender plants and beautiful flowers are buried beneath the flood. Thus with your heart while bowed down with its burden of grief. You forget that the flood will abate, and that then the blossoms will burst forth in all the greater luxuriance, because of the baptism through which they have passed. Richer and deeper will be the soil from which future harvests shall spring. Bereavement hath no share



of curse. The good Father doeth—not some things, but all things, well.

“Oh for the peace which floweth as a river,  
Making life's desert places bloom and smile!  
Oh for the faith to grasp heaven's bright “forever”  
Amid the shadows of earth's “little while!”

Count your treasures. Nothing, no one, is lost, while you, even in your disconsolation, are richly gaining. In the Old World they showed me pictures by the old masters, valued at a hundred thousand dollars apiece. But I know of pictures beside which these would be pitifully mean and cheap. Look into your heart! Behold the picture of your sainted dead! Can it ever be effaced from your sacred love? Could it be purchased with base gold? No, no; it has become a part of yourself. It will grow more beautiful and angelic as the years go on. No power can rob you of it. It is where thieves cannot break through nor steal, and where no moth can corrupt. Death may beckon you from these earthly scenes, but the picture of your beloved, the glorified countenance of your dear one, as indelibly stamped upon your memory and forever impressed upon your sweet affection, is yours, not Death's. Whatever love has once secured to you is exempt from all vicissitude of danger.

“I shall know the loved who have gone before,  
And joyfully sweet will the meeting be,  
When over the river, the peaceful river,  
The angel of death shall carry me.”

Oh, the mementos of the dead which love rescues from the profane and common things of earth. Whatever the dear one has fondly possessed has become forever sacred in our hands. If the world is poorer because a dear one has departed, it is richer because it was that one's home. The air, the light, and every object in

which the beloved had once found gladness, now occupy a more precious place in our affections. But what shall we say of heaven? Is it not brought nearer to earth, because the one to whom we still cling is there also? And is not heaven more heavenly to those who can say, "My treasure is there, my home is forecast upon its bright horizon, my interest is henceforth centered in its divine benediction of eternal peace?" Speak then to the sainted dead as though the Kingdom of God were not far from each one of us,—not far from love. As you said ere Death came between you and the dear object of your affection, still say with fullest assurance:

"Yes, I will love thee ever,  
    May Heaven this truth attest,  
E'en till we cross the river  
    And enter there our rest;  
One here in joy and sorrow,  
    One mid that radiant band,  
We still will love each other  
    When round the throne we stand.  
"For hearts on earth united  
    In bonds of holy love,  
Shall know but higher rapture  
    And purer joys above:  
No friendships shall be broken.  
    Or earthly ties be riven,  
But hope shall find fruition;  
    For Love is born of Heaven."

IMMORTALITY.



## IMMORTALITY.

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If a man die shall he live again?—Job xiv. : 14.

The Old Testament leans toward the negative of the great question we are now to discuss. Even the psalmist says: "The dead praise not the Lord; neither any that go down into silence." And Job adds: "Man lieth down and riseth not. Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake; nor be roused out of their sleep." Then the Preacher testifies that, "All go to one place; \* \* \* the dead know not anything."

Leaving the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear Pliny say: "Death is an everlasting sleep." And Æschylus adds: "There is no resurrection for him who is once dead." Even Napoleon does not seem to have had very exalted ideas of a future state. He says: "My soul will pass into history and the deathless memories of mankind, and thus in glory shall I be immortal." Dr. Johnson announced: "I want more proofs of the immortality of the soul." But Harriet Martineau professed to be satisfied without proof or belief, and thus wrote: "I neither wish to live longer here, nor to find life again elsewhere. It seems to me simply absurd to expect it, and a mere act of restricted human imagination and morality to conceive of it. It seems to me that there is not only a total absence of a renewed life for human beings, but so clear a way of accounting for the conception, in the immaturity of the human mind, that I myself utterly disbelieve in a future life." The ex-clergyman, George C.

Miln, dares to say: "To those who confidently predict a future existence for the soul of man, I again propose the demonstration of the separability of mind and body. Prove that, and I am convinced." B. F. Underwood finds the same difficulty and says: "The mind is evolved with the body. They grow together. What proof is there that when one dies the other continues to live?" Charles Bradlaugh is also upon the negative and inquires: "What do you know about the soul? Nothing whatever." And again he declares: "Your doctrine that man has a soul prevents him from rising." John Stuart Mill also denies the great hope and declares that "the mere cessation of existence is no evil to any one." Robert G. Ingersoll probably represents the disbelievers as faithfully as any one. He gives it as his opinion that "Thought is a form of force. We walk with the same force with which we think." Again: "Man is a machine into which we put what we call food, and produce what we call thought. Think of that wonderful chemistry by which bread was changed into the divine tragedy of Hamlet." Again he dogmatizes thus: "A poem is produced by the forces of nature, and is as necessarily and naturally produced as mountains and seas."

I have now quoted the very strongest assertions against the doctrine of immortality that I have been able to find. Are they formidable? Do they frighten any one? Will they not serve the good purpose of making the affirmative of the question all the more beautiful by contrast? If the issue could be settled by the voice of thoughtful men and women, it would quickly be decided in the affirmative by an overwhelming majority. Such famous thinkers, even in ancient times, as Zoroaster, Xenophon, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and numerous others, furnish eloquent words in support



of the belief in a future life, and whose opinions are certainly entitled to as much weight as those we have just had under review. As to the poets, their name is legion, and with only a few insignificant exceptions, they stand in solid phalanx in defense of the beautiful doctrine of man's immortality.

Says Richard H. Dana :

“Oh, listen, man!

A voice within us speaks the startling word,  
 ‘Man, thou shalt never die!’ Celestial voices  
 Hymn it around our souls.”

Rev. Dr. Guthrie offers us a noble sentiment in these words:

“I live for those that love me,  
 For those that love me true,  
 For the Heaven that smiles above me  
 And waits my coming too.”

Lydia Jane Peisson<sup>h</sup> was certainly inspired by a most comforting hope when she wrote:

“We feel as if a breath might put aside  
 The shadowy curtains of the spirit land,  
 Revealing all the loved and glorified  
 That Death has taken from Affection's band.”

Better than the idea that “thought is a form of force” is the glowing verse of T. W. Parsons:

“Believ'st thou in eternal things?  
 Thou knowest in thy inmost heart,  
 Thou art not clay; thy soul hath wings,  
 And what thou seest is but part.”

How inspiring are the words of Jedediah Hunt:

“Broadcast, in nature's wide expanse,  
 Unnumbered worlds like gems are set,  
 And beam as beacons to enhance  
 Some dawning glories, distant yet;  
 But in the scale which weighs the whole.  
 How far transcends one human soul!  
 For all those worlds may fade away.

And sink in dark forgetful night;  
 But spirit, born of endless day,  
 Will flourish in unfading light;  
 Coeval with the life of Him  
 Who rules the highest cherubim."

Better than Job's doleful complaint that "man lyeth down and riseth not," is the vigorous thought of Lord Byron:

"Immortality o'ersweeps  
 All pains, all tears, all time, all fears—and peals  
 Like the eternal thunders of the deep  
 Into my ears this truth—Thou liv'st forever!"

No sooner has the great Apostle of Doubt told us that thought is one of the transformations of bread, than we listen with gladness to the hopeful language of Alfred Tennyson:

"I trust I have not wasted breath;  
 I think we are not wholly brain,  
 Magnetic mockeries."

Who does not joyfully turn from David's utterance of despair, that "the dead praise not the Lord" to such a sentiment as that which comes from Barton Booth:

"Love, and his sister fair, the Soul,  
 Twin-born, from heaven together came;  
 Love will the universe control,  
 When dying seasons lose their name;  
 Divine abodes shall own his power  
 When time and death shall be no more."

Harriet Martineau's position is unique. Claiming not to desire a future life, she stands almost alone among thoughtful and hopeful beings. Her mental condition, if not abnormal, is certainly exceptive. Is it safe to attempt to model the human heart after such a pattern? Surely she does not represent the prevailing spirituality of mankind, especially that of her own sex. She speaks for herself alone, while Mrs. A. L. Barbauld thus speaks for the millions:

"Life! I know not what thou art,  
 But know that thou and I must part;  
 And when, or how, or where we met  
 I own to me 's a secret yet.  
 Life! we've been long together,  
 Through pleasant and through cloudy weather.  
 'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,—  
 Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, or tear;  
 Then steal away, give little warning,  
 Choose thine own time,  
 Say not good-night—but in some brighter clime,  
 Bid me good-morning."

Vain man may audaciously deny all that he cannot demonstrate, and may talk about the impossibility of "separating mind and body," but still the soul within us gives hearty response to these words of M. J. Savage:

"Since love is all the joy of life,  
 In earth below or heaven above,  
 Somewhere, we cannot help but trust,  
 God keeps for us the ones we love."

Vain-glorious Napoleon may look for his "immortality in the pages of history"—a very questionable boon, especially in his case—but the firmer trust is that of E. S. Porter:

"We are not shadows: spirits live  
 And will forever rise,  
 To share what God alone can give  
 In his fair Paradise.

How harsh the question—how it grates upon the inner consciousness: "What do you know about the soul? Nothing whatever."

I know not when, or how, or where,  
 The soul came to my babe so fair.  
 I only know—'tis all I care—  
 I gaze into his eyes,—'tis there.

But you will ask me for something besides the opinions of philosophers and the songs of poets on this momentous question. Is there no solid argument in

support of the doctrine? Yes; much. But the trouble is, we demand too much. Emerson wisely says: "We are much better believers in immortality than we can give grounds for. The real evidence is too subtle, or is higher than we can write down in propositions." And James Martineau says truly: "We do not believe immortality because we have proved it, but we forever try to prove it because we believe it." The evidence of man's immortality is mostly, if not wholly, circumstantial. Spiritualists, it is true, claim to have direct evidence,—that of their own senses,—but, at present, it is not such as our courts of law are willing to accept.

But let no one suppose that circumstantial evidence is necessarily weak and unreliable. In many instances it is more trustworthy than direct evidence. In judiciary proceedings it takes very high rank. Human life has frequently been saved or forfeited wholly upon the strength of it. By its power alone the ends of justice have often been faithfully accomplished. The belief in immortality rests upon the strong foundation of great and numerous probabilities. Some of these we will now examine.

First. If there be no immortality, this life is not only a sad failure but an inexplicable evil, completely out of harmony with the fitness of things. To believe that such is the case is to join with Prior in saying: "He alone is blessed who never was born." Did anyone ever have twelve consecutive hours of unalloyed happiness? Said Lord Bolingbroke; "There is so much trouble in coming into the world, and so much more, as well as meanness, in going out of it, that 'tis scarcely worth while to be here at all." Herodotus mentions a Tracian tribe who mourned when a child was born, and rejoiced when one died. In view of the hard circum-

stances which attend the millions through their earthly pilgrimage, this is not so monstrous as it appears. True, man has been defined as an animal who laughs; but mirth does not always indicate happiness.

“We look before and after  
And pine for what is not;  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught.”

“Pleasure itself,” says Montaigne, “is painful at the bottom.” An old man once said: “When I was young I was poor; when old I became rich; but in each condition I found disappointment. When the faculties of enjoyment were, I had not the means; when the means came, the faculties were gone.”

Not only is worldly existence a painful mixture of good and evil, but there is no possible way of ever having it otherwise. If men and women could be made so perfect that their souls would be self-contained and at peace with nature and mankind, the task would no sooner reach completion than they would be ready to die, giving their place to infants, who, through ignorance and imperfection, would stumble and blunder very much like the children of six thousand or ten thousand years ago. If the children should happen to turn out good from the very beginning, we should hear Wordsworth saying: “The good die first; and they whose hearts are dry as summer dust, burn to the socket.” God designed this world to be nothing but a nursery, a primary school, a drill-ground, a place of preparation, and it is therefore quite consistent with the requirements of infinite wisdom that such a condition of things should exist as precludes the possibility of earthly perfection. We find therefore just what we should expect to find,—not only progression but retrogression. Anything to keep us battling,



overcoming, growing. Families grow up, become great, and then recede into obscurity. Princes trace their descent back to slaves, and their line finally ends where it began. Earth is mostly re-populated by men and women who have more blood and muscle than poetry or philosophy. This operates to check intellectual progression. The meaning of it all is that the powers which be do not aim to establish human perfection on this mundane sphere. To my mind, this state of things is in exact accordance with deep wisdom, and points unmistakably to a glorious hereafter. As an end, this life is a monstrous absurdity. As a means, looking toward a grander condition of existence, nothing could be more admirable.

“Aye, what is it all, if this life be all,  
But a draught to its dregs of a cup of gall,  
A bitter round of the rayless years,  
A saddening dole of wormwood tears,  
A sorrowful plaint of the spirit’s thrall,  
The grave, the shroud, the funeral pall,—  
This is the sum, if this life be all.”

But it is not all. At least the evidence, so far as presented, leads us plainly to this conclusion.

Second. We find ourselves endowed with longings and aspirations which are out of all proportion to the possibilities of this present life. Suppose an embryotic bird could think, we might fancy it as questioning itself in this manner: “Why am I imprisoned in this narrow shell? Little feet have I, but there is no place here to run; a beak has been given to me, but there is no food here which requires its exercise; eyes I have, but there is nothing here to see; and tender wings are folded about me, but how can I ever fly in such a place as this?” But wait! One day the shell bursts asunder and the bird comes forth to learn the strange truth that it was not



made for its narrow tenement, not made for life within the walls, but for the larger life outside, where, in the glorious effulgence of a noonday sun, it can spread its wings beneath the blue canopy of heaven and soar into the great shining heights, filling all nature with song and joy. It must be so with the soul. As compared with the life to which it is called, its present environments are prison walls. Raphael expresses the same idea: "Naught that has been written is truly, really beautiful, and the heart of man never discloses its best and most divine portion. It is impossible! The instrument is of flesh, and the note is of fire." To look carefully and prayerfully at the best within us is a sure way to recognize that which is endless. "Who reads his bosom reads immortal life."

Third. The supreme importance of the doctrine is at least *prima facie* evidence that it rests on a foundation of truth. Figuiier does not overstate the case in affirming that "Civilization, society and morals are like a string of beads whose knot is the belief in the immortality of the soul; break the knot, and the beads scatter." Indeed, he might find room for other and yet more precious beads upon this imaginary string. Prove to me that there is no immortality, and with most unblushing assurance I will undertake to show that there is no God, no godliness, no spirit, no spirituality, no Christ, no Christianity, no beauty of truth, no loveliness of virtue, no worthy authority, no permanent merit, and no genuine righteousness. Lord Byron is represented to have said: "If the hope of immortality is false, it is worth more than the world's best truth." It is hard to conceive that we should have been placed in an universe where a falsity is the most useful and charming object we possess. Referring to immortality,

Bayard Taylor thus spoke: "I could not support life if I did not believe it. I could not accomplish my work. I have noticed, too, that when an artist ceases to believe in immortality he no longer paints fine pictures." Man's superior worth has little basis, unless he possesses a permanent quality. If he is a creature of time only, he does not differ essentially from other animals, except in being the most inconsistent, most vain, and most deceived of them all. Copernicus, in dedicating his work to Pope Paul III., confesses that he was brought to a belief in the sun's central position by the feeling that there should be symmetry in the universe. By the same token, we are made to feel that a future life awaits our aspiring souls. Moral symmetry requires it. The balance between questions and possible answers must not be destroyed. This life has asked more questions than this life could ever answer. Eternity will be required to perform the task. Unless we can have that, we shall never be able to say, as the woman did who for the first time looked upon the ocean, "She was glad for once in her life to see something which there was enough of."

Fourth. The independent action of mind is sufficient to show that it is not wholly identified with the body. From an article in the *Edinburg Review* I quote as follows: "Sleep walkers have been known, who could not only walk, and perform all ordinary acts in the dark as well as in the light, but who went on writing or reading without interruption, though an opaque substance—a book or a slate—was interposed, and would dot the i's and cross the t's with unconscious correctness, without any use of their eyes." Persons who have been resuscitated from drowning bear witness that their minds were never more intensely active than at the near approach of death, when the bodily functions had all but ceased to

operate. Victor Hugo at eighty years of age declared that he felt the everlasting youth within him. The snows of winter were on his head but the bloom and freshness of summer possessed his soul. On another occasion he writes: "It seems as though, at the approach of a certain dark hour, the light of heaven infills those who are leaving the light of earth."

There is no middle ground between the doctrine of immortality and the doctrine that mindless force rules the universe. We must either be spiritists for time and eternity, or be materialists while we live,—and nothing hereafter. Somehow, materialism gives no satisfactory explanation to the various phenomena of human existence. All that the physical sciences can tell us is that man is a compound of oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous, calcium, sodium and small quantities of other metals. Is it possible that he has nothing but metal in his thought, love, and worship? Much the greater part of his brain may be converted into water. Can water reason? If so, the ancients who worshiped Neptune had a very great and intelligent god.

Fifth. An exact system of compensation, traces of which we find throughout the universe, necessitates immortality. Those who unjustly suffer must receive their final good. Those who are born with the curse of crime upon them, and on whose vitals most painful diseases continually prey, giving the poor victim no peace by day or by night, from the cradle to the grave, would certainly be entitled to a future compensation in any universe over which an arch-demon did not preside. I knew a little innocent child who came into this world without feet or hands. During his young and tender years how painful it was to see him watch the other children at their play, and to hear him tell what he

would do, and how much he would enjoy when his hands and feet should grow. We knew that they would never grow, and yet we had not the heart to tell him so.

If there be any God, and if he have any love, wisdom, and power, we can wait, the limbless little one can wait, and all will issue well.

With these five probabilities in favor of man's continuous existence we rest the case. They do not constitute a mathematical demonstration, but they furnish sufficient proof to convince most people who think deeply upon the subject. Indeed, the evidence, taken as a whole, is much stronger than that which we require concerning other matters of vital importance to our daily welfare.

Some good people will be astonished, perhaps saddened, that I should have attempted to treat the subject of immortality without relying, first, last and throughout, on the Gospel, especially the resurrection of Christ. I reply that until men are convinced that the strongest probabilities lend support to the doctrine, they will not be likely to accept Christ's resurrection as a fact, and will derive no great comfort from Bible testimony. Most persons do not believe in immortality because of the events which succeeded the crucifixion, but they believe that Joseph's tomb could not retain the blessed Jesus, because of their faith in immortality.

The church has committed the grave error of trying to force a fact into the opinions of men, before presenting the grounds on which the fact must rest. The Gospel has done its part in showing us the importance of faith. "The dead are raised up" whenever we turn away from the grave and look upward to behold them. Our own dead return to us whenever our faith stands at the door of the soul and beckons them. Why has not

faith done its perfect work? Why is immortality doubted? Because of the false dogmas and silly notions with which it has been associated. In the same flower-pot which contains the heavenly plant, grow noxious weeds. In pulling up these, the other has been uprooted. Christ taught, on a certain occasion, that it was better for wheat and tares to grow in the same field until the harvest, than that the wheat should be endangered by seeking to destroy the tares. He thought it better that men should believe too much rather than not enough,—some falsity rather than no truth. But must we always have one evil or the other? Why not boldly attack the enemy which sows the tares? Why not put a stop to weed-culture? Because the world has been told that there is an endless hell, the belief in any hereafter has had to suffer.

Theodore Parker had the good grace to say of the Universalists: "They are the only sect that teach the doctrine of immortality so that it will be no curse to the race to find it true."

The ecclesiasticism which insists on the resurrection of our physical body is another of the hindrances in the work of establishing the universal faith. So also is the whole system of eschatology concerning a frightful "day of judgment," a formal post-mortem, post-resurrection trial, which, at the best, could be nothing but a farce, and then the awful and tragical sentence of the judge which shall separate forever the spotless saints from the black-souled reprobates.

Again, even Heaven itself has been often disfigured by coarse descriptions. Who would care to live forever if there is nothing to offer but "that sleepy Paradise, where souls, ranged on benches, do nothing but gaze on the glory of God and chant his praises," and where, ac-



according to Dr. Jonathan Edwards, "the sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. When they see others of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, oh, it will make them sensible how happy they are." For my own part I can fully sympathize with De Finod, who remarks: "Paradise must be a tiresome place if it is peopled only by those saintly souls whose company we so dread here below."

It is not well to attempt a minute description of the future life. If we could have no other conception of the sun than that obtained from comparing it with something else,—which is the essence of description,—how unworthy would that conception be. Of this one thing I am certain,—God would not provide a Heaven for us unless it was fit for us. There can be nothing small or mean in its appointments.

After all, where but in our own mind shall be discovered our real heaven?

"A mind not to be changed by place or time.

The mind is its own place, and in itself,

Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.

To these words of John Milton may be added a stanza from Thomas Percy.

"My mind to me a kingdom is;

Such perfect joy therein I find

As far exceeds all earthly bliss,

That God and nature hath assigned."

To be thus conditioned is to be free from doubt or fear respecting the future. To be consciously worthy of a great destiny is the best way to convince ourselves of its reality. Princess Elizabeth was right:—

"This is joy, this is true pleasure,

If best things we make our treasure,

And enjoy them at full leisure

Evermore in richest measure."



PROGRESSION.



## PROGRESSION.

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Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.  
—Ecclesiastes vii. : 10.

Nature, art, science, literature, manners,—everything, in fact, except gray-haired theology, testifies to the wisdom of this text. Take the lessons of botany, for example. All of earth's multitudinous variety of roses can be traced back to the scantily-furnished, thorn-guarded wild rose. Flowers do not double their petals until carefully cultivated. Adam's button-hole bouquet must have been quite a sorry looking object, but, considering that he did not possess a button-hole, it probably answered every purpose. Our garden plum is a descendant of a variety of the common sloe, or blackthorn,—a small, sour fruit. Our apples, fine enough and varied enough to satisfy the palate of an epicure, are nothing but a laborious and painstaking development of the originally wild and bitter crab-apple. If this was the fruit that Mother Eve ate, it is not surprising that evil consequences followed. The luscious peach of the present day is quite unlike the unwholesome production which formerly grew upon a shrub whose juice was so poisonous that savages used it upon the points of their arrows, for the purpose of carrying sure death to their enemies. Wheat was once so nearly like tares, that some have supposed it had the same origin. We see, therefore, that the Garden of Eden, or first garden of the world,

would present a very poor appearance, if brought into comparison with an ordinary farm of modern times.

Zoology indicates the same wonderful degree of progress. If our first parents owned a horse, he must have had five toes to each foot, and must have been too unintelligent and intractable to draw a bushel of sour grapes from one end of his master's garden-patch to the other.

To regard Adam as having led an indolent life is to forget that a single item of his busy career consists in giving names to all the animals that populate the earth. Three hundred and twenty thousand different kinds have already been described by zoologists, and yet we are not allowed to attach an additional cubit to Noah's ark.

Moses was highly educated, as scholarship was ranked in his day, but in astronomy he could sit at the feet of most of our small boys and girls. Some weak intellects still think the sun is only six feet in diameter, and Joshua probably thought that he himself was considerably bigger than the sun; and his orthodox friends are determined that this lofty claim shall be sustained, even though the heavens fall. He is still presented to us, therefore, as having practised the most remarkable "bossism" on record.

We now go in ships to the antipodes, although Lactantius declared it to be impossible, and Augustine unscriptural, and Boniface of Metz, beyond the limits of salvation.

First things are rude, coarse, uncouth. The first plow was a crooked stick. The first watch was as large as a tea saucer, and Richard Wallingford's clock had to be wound and regulated almost every hour.

We find so much in Shakespeare that never grows

old that we fancy he must have lived and written only a few years ago. Poor man! How did he exist, when there was so little in the world. The odor of tea or coffee had not yet reached the English kitchen. As he was nineteen years old when tobacco first found its way into Great Britain, and as boys do not usually begin to establish foolish habits after that age, he probably never mixed his blood with nicotine. Forks did not come into general use until he was well along in life, so it is quite probable that he used his fingers to handle his food, the same as other people. Before the time of James I., it was customary for wealthy persons who were invited out to dinner to carry their forks and spoons with them.

Once it was thought that the Seven Wonders of the world would always retain their place of pre-eminence. Now they are almost despised for their comparative insignificance. True, the Pyramids of Egypt attract admiration on account of their massiveness, but the Mont Cenis tunnel is a far greater achievement in stone work. The Mausoleum by Artemesia (at Halicarnassus) for her deceased husband, King Mausolus, was a great piece of art, but a Greenwood, or a Mount Vernon, cemetery, where thousands of common people receive stately monuments, is a much greater triumph of civilization. The temple of Diana in Ephesus, built by Asiatic states, with its numerous Parian marble columns, was worthy of its fame, but as one of the Seven Wonders it is eclipsed by any modern observatory, where, by telescopic lenses, the heavens are seemingly brought almost within the grasp of man. Babylon, with its mighty walls and elaborate hanging gardens, as planned by Nebuchadnezzar, was a marvelous object of architecture, but a modern city with its billions of dollars' worth of treasure, and which doesn't need any wall whatever to protect it, is the real

wonder. The Colossus at Rhodes, or statue of Apollo, must give place to the Brooklyn bridge. We admit that the statue of Jupiter Olympus, made of gold and ivory, by Phidias, was something to study and remember; but the man who can now stand on America's shore and hold converse with his brother in Europe by means of a submarine cable is a greater than Jupiter of old. Coming to the last of the Seven Wonders, Pharos at Alexandria, by Ptolemy Philadelphius,—a beautiful light-house of white marble, in which a fire was kept burning night and day—we must still disparage the ancients, by referring to our electric illuminations by which their brightest flame could have been made to cast a heavy shadow.

Our material progress has been all that could be desired. The former times are not better than these. During a period of seven hundred years of Roman history, there were but three short intervals when war was not raging. In those seven centuries how little was done toward human advancement! How is it now? Someone has recently written: "I am an old man; yet in material things I have seen the creation of a new world. I am contemporary with the railroad, the telegraph, the steamship, the photograph, the sewing machine, the steam plow, the friction match, gas light, chloroform, nitro-glycerine, the monitor, the caloric engine, the California gold discoveries, gutta serena, canned fruit, the electric light, the telephone, etc." All in one life-time! Methuselah was nine hundred and sixty-nine years old when he died, but the human progress of which he had been witness was less than that which, in these modern times, is crowded into as many days.

Now, the singular thing is that the religious world still sleeps in the arms of conservatism. It is the one great exception to a general rule. We do not deny that



the church, as a whole, has made progress, but it has always been made in spite of its own most vigorous protest. What new idea has it received for hundreds of years which has not been forced upon it from without? Since the time of Galileo until now, what new thought or interpretation has the church accepted which had not been previously expounded by "infidels," "philosophers," "reprobates," "scientific skeptics," "free-thinkers," "rationalists," or the like? And how ill-natured and ill-behaved it has always shown itself in respect to those who have sought to benefit it with new light! How it has kicked and squirmed like a spoilt child, when a new creed, or some slight modification of an old one, has been proposed for its acceptance. Even the doctrine of God's all-conquering love, or Christ's complete victory, which would seem to be rather acceptable to any tender and loving heart, has been spurned with bitterest contempt, while its advocates have been misrepresented and vilified as a matter of religious duty.

Has Dr. Duncan spoken in vain? "There is a progressive element in religion. It is a mistake to look upon our fathers as our seniors. They are our juniors. The church has advanced wonderfully since its foundations were laid."

A conservative, pure and simple, is one who is bound hand and foot to the stopping post of a dead generation. Douglas Jerrold describes him as a man "who will not look at the new moon, out of respect for that 'ancient institution,' the old one."

Some persons work a faithful horse till he is no longer serviceable, and then, out of mistaken kindness, prolong his miserable existence several years, "for the good he has done." No doubt that Lutherism, Calvinism, Knoxism and Edwardsism have done some good, as

well as a deal of mischief, but how many generations ought they to be boarded and nursed and lodged "for the good they have done?" The time has come when their room is better than their company.

Is it not true that the man who virtually murdered Michael Servetus leans today against many an evangelical pulpit, pointing his finger of stone to the Five Points,—not of New York city, where actual Christian work has been accomplished, but to his pet dogmas,—“original sin or total depravity, election or predestination, particular redemption, effectual calling, and perseverance of the saints?”

Most churchmen are like a traveller pursuing a road where a high board fence occupies either side of the way. If, perchance, he pauses a moment to peep through a crevice, and catches a glimpse of the glorious landscape, the unbounded sunlit fields, the far-reaching, wide-spreading horizon, where “hills peep o’er hills and Alps on Alps arise,” his conservative companions pull at his sacerdotal robes, warning him back from this charming but dangerous outlook, lest he be tempted to scale the fence at a single bound and hie away to the larger liberty, the richer and more expansive life.

Wendell Phillips was not far from right when he said: “What is fanaticism today is the fashionable creed tomorrow, and trite as the multiplication table a week after.” At first, the question is, “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” and afterward the declaration is insisted on that no good has ever come from elsewhere.

If, as the evangelical churches teach, man started perfect and fell from the heights, if, in the former times, the Almighty condescended to talk face to face with his children, if he daily performed miracles before them, and constructed their political laws and wrote their

books, then our text is wrong, and those who ask why the former days were better than these inquire wisely. But, if it be as science and philosophy teach, if mankind has climbed upward from the beginning, if, as Mr. Beecher says, the fall of Adam was a fall upstairs, then the authority of the past cannot be justly imposed upon us, for the best word of yesterday is not so good as the best word of today, even though that word was proclaimed by the ancient patriarchs,—mere boys, comparatively speaking, whom nobody thought of addressing except by their first name.

“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning,” says one of the Bible writers, and this should teach us to look forward and not backward for the truest and most perfect.

“Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more  
For olden time and holier shore.”

“I do by no means advise you,” says Chesterfield, “to throw away your time in ransacking, like a dull antiquarian, the minute and unimportant parts of remote and fabulous times. Let blockheads read what blockheads wrote.” John Bunyan said, in speaking of a certain act, “Before I will do it I will stay here till the moss grows over my face.” Church people have taken a similar stand in regard to accepting better views of God and man,—until the moss has actually grown all over them. While claiming to be always ready to receive new light, and even praying for more knowledge, they have practically occupied the position of the Scotchman: “I am open to conviction,” said he, “but I’d like to see the man that can convince me.” These theological troglodytes have changed nothing and modified nothing except the good motto, “Be sure you are right and then go ahead.” This they have made to read, “Be

sure you are where you were, and then stay where you are." They agree with Cowper that

"To follow foolish precedents and wink  
With both our eyes is easier than to think."

A traveller tells us that he found people in Arkansas who strenuously opposed the introduction of steam cars, on the ground that they would frighten game out of the country. This fear finds its parallel in those churches which would block the wheels of progress in the interest of that which it were a clear gain to lose. You have heard of the prisoner who protested against having his prison wall pulled down, because it would involve the loss of the little chink through which he had been accustomed to receive light. Fish confined in a glass globe would probably think the world was coming to an end if the glass were suddenly broken and they were spilt into the sea.

We hear about a new orthodoxy that has recently arrived. Many thanks for anything new. But when we examine the stranger, we confess to a feeling of disappointment. New orthodoxy, as a general rule, is nothing but old orthodoxy with its mouth shut. Universalists are invited to forget their past experience with it, and to come boldly into its presence. During the week the animal is kept carefully muzzled, and on most of the Sabbaths. Occasionally, however, it is unmuzzled for a brief breathing spell, and then the slumbering conservatives open wide their lustreless, sanctimonious eyes, and piously smile inside and out.

In defence of standard evangelicism, it is frequently said that the majority of Christians still believe in it, while liberal sects are comparatively small. Why should it not be so, since conservatism represents the dead, and progression the living? The world can always count

more by looking backward than by looking forward. The representatives of deceased hosts are made quite useful in helping to swell majorities, just as a political party has occasionally carried an election by managing, in some way, to get dead men to vote. Ever since the time of Christ, veritable truth-seekers have always been in the minority. He who fears that the minority is wrong simply because it is not the majority, has read history to no purpose, and is not acquainted with Jesus, the despised. Paul was not ashamed to be ranked with the unpopular few. "For this I confess unto thee," he says, "that after the way which they call heresey, so worship I the God of my fathers." Again he says: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And what is this prize? What did Christ propose for man's spiritual profit? What was his mission? I will not ask the church, but take his own words in reply. "I am come," he says, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." To abound more and more in all the rich treasure of the soul is to be a disciple of Christ. To progress is to follow him to the mountain tops. Not to progress is to remain below while he is speaking above, and to breathe the dead and heavy air which settles in earth's deep places. The trouble with Christian conservatives is that they entirely reverse the excellent rule of Saint Paul, and forget nothing which is behind, and reach forward to nothing which is before. The cause of this is spiritual laziness. It is easier to be on the chariot seat than to be in the thills, and much safer to be carried in an ambulance than to occupy the front



rank among a courageous soldiery. "Those who lead progression's van, must bear the brunt of battle, dying in advance of the heavy columns that slow but sure are marching on their trail."

It may be asked whether there is anything in these ideas that can be practically applied in the great work of saving the world from sin. Certainly: it is not by miraculous conversion, or sudden regeneration, but by persistent advancement, constant change for the better, that the soul shall be made fit, at last, for the kingdom of righteousness. Sir John Cutler had a pair of black worsted stockings which his maid darned so often with silk that they finally became a pair of silk stockings. Thus, a coarse-spun character can be made fine, not by the excitement of a revival meeting, where spiritual washing and mending is taken in, and where customers can have their work done "while they wait," but by weaving into the soul from day to day and from year to year the silken thread of eternal truth. Along the line of gradual development, and along that line alone, is true manhood or womanhood made possible. There it is

"That men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things."

Prof. Wyman says: "It is a well known physiological fact that living beings may be slowly transferred to new and widely different conditions without injury; but if the same change is suddenly made, they perish." This law is equally applicable to spiritual concerns. Instantaneous changes in one's character are impracticable. Real changes are the work of years.

Not only does the present life call for constant progression, but the soul's future will be likewise conditioned. The problem of universal salvation finds its solution in this important fact. All men will be finally



saved, not because the Omnipotent Power will take them to himself, whether or no, either with or against their will, but because a progressive universe, packed with progressive influences for good, must sooner or later accomplish the divine desire. Man's freedom will be as inviolate in the next life as it is in this. He is subject to influences here, he will be subject to them there. The difference is that the divine influences of the immortal state will fall directly upon the spirit, instead of having to be drawn through the world, the flesh and the creeds, as at present.

The theology of progression should teach us the philosophy of reformation. The way to abolish sinful practices is not to abolish any part of man's nature, but to put him in the way of outgrowing them. If pious people do not like the amusements of the day, the very best thing they can do is to bend their stiff backs and furnish a better kind. If we detest a liquor saloon, the wisest course we can pursue is to throw open the doors of some other resort, only do not let us insist that it shall be a prayer-meeting or nothing. I once lived in a city that tried the experiment of prohibition. In order to keep young men out of club rooms and dangerous places, the well-meaning Christian ladies of all the churches banded together, rented a large, airy apartment, put an elegant carpet on the floor, blossoming plants in the lace-curtained windows, singing birds in gilded cages, while at a well appointed counter a good cup of coffee could at any time be procured, besides various religious books, papers, and magazines. White-haired matrons and aged spinsters presided over all the details, maintained the solemn dignity of the good cause, and were an absolute safeguard against any impropriety. Each day a particular hour was set apart for gospel singing

and praying. Who came? Who were the patrons of this enterprise? Clergymen, deacons, class leaders, and bores. Whether they were reformed or not is quite doubtful. That which young people, and some old people, want, and will have, as a substitute for amusements is—amusements. Establish your coffee-rooms or temperance parlors, but if you expect they will ever be patronized by the very persons whom they are designed to benefit, put a placard on the door saying, “No saints admitted.” Great wrongs exist; but when wrong remedies are applied to them, they become greater than ever. In this respect, man commits his most egregious blunders. For three hundred years digitalis has been given as a depressant of the heart, and physicians have been taught to avoid giving it when the heart was weak. But at this late day come Bernard and others and show by actual experiment that the drug in question is a heart tonic and stimulant. Just such mistakes have been made in dealing with man’s moral nature. For more than three hundred years wrong remedies have been administered. The evil tendencies in human nature have been stimulated by the very medicines which spiritual physicians had depended on for depressing them. When all else has been tried, it will be found that no miracle, no supernatural conversion, no presto-effected change, will cure the sin-sick soul,—nothing but far-reaching, all-comprehensive progression. The day of judgment itself is nothing but a long period of progressiveness.

Paul tells us that he was caught up into the third heaven. I like this numerical adjective: it belongs to an infinite series. The third heaven is not far from the bottom. It savors strongly of earth. Millions of them are farther on.

There is nothing for us to do but to move forward

and upward, taking humanity with us. "The eyes of man," says Emerson, "are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead." The Rev. Mr. Mangasarian, one of the latest converts to the requirements of progress, offers this fine sentiment: "I am not as great a man as John Calvin or Jonathan Edwards, but you must remember I am standing on their shoulders, and a dwarf on the shoulders of a giant can see farther than the giant."

When the storm cloud has performed its mission, God does not keep it in the sky for the good it has done, but hides it in the invisible air in order that the heavens may shine through and bless the earth. In this way we should treat the theology of the past. Long ago it spent its force. Nothing remains but its sombre shade, the uncanny ghost of the Has Been. Let the bright sun of eternal truth shine fully upon it and it will disappear.

Oliver Wendell Holmes presents true gospel in these words:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave the low-vaulted past;  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine out-grown shell by life's unresting sea."



# REVELATION.





## REVELATION.

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Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. —2 Timothy iii. : 16.

As an instance of the dishonest treatment to which the Bible has been subjected by its friends, it may be mentioned that for more than two hundred and fifty years, our text has been rendered as follows: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," etc. Theological teachers knew, or ought to have known, that King James' version was wrong, but this knowledge was not generally given to the people. I suspect that if the real motive of this duplicity were probed to the bottom, the thing which men call expediency would be found there. With honest purpose, dishonesty has been suffered. It was thought, and not without reason, that if men were told that, neither in this text, nor any other, did the Bible claim to be an inspired book, the volume would cease to be regarded with that reverential awe which had been formerly shown toward it. In a quiet way, modern Protestantism has practically adopted the motto of ancient Catholicism: "The end justifies the means." Doubtless some effects have been produced by preaching the errors of the authorized version of Scripture, which cannot result from the more truthful statements of the Oxford version. For the sake of these effects, the former version will continue to remain popular. King

James himself was informed of the numerous mistakes which his translators had made, but he had no conscientious scruples against having the work sent forth to the world as the Word of God. But we are not living under his reign. The motto of the present administration is, "Tell the truth."

Rev. Washington Gladden presents us with some thoughtful considerations on this subject which are worthy of great respect. He says: "When we come upon a verse or a clause that we know is not in the original Greek, we ought to say so. When I know that certain words found in Matthew or in Luke are an interpolation, that they were not written by Matthew or Luke, what right have I to give them out as the words of Matthew or Luke? To do that would be to handle the word of God fraudulently. Yet a great many persons are inclined to practice concealment about this matter, from the fear that the Bible will lose its authority among the people, if the truth about it comes to be known. There is a certain, petty notion of the verbal and literal infallibility of the Bible which would certainly suffer if the truth were frankly told; and the fear is, that, with the breaking down of this notion, the faith of man in the divine character of the book would be greatly weakened. Such a fear is dishonorable at once to the book. \* \* \* It dishonors God to teach that his kingdom can be promoted by concealment and misrepresentation. The idea that it is not safe to tell the people the facts about the Bible is of a piece with the old idea encountered by Wyclif—that it is not safe to give the people the Bible itself. If it is right that they should have the Bible, then it is right that they should have all the facts about the Bible—about the way it was written and compiled and the manner of its transmission through the centur-

ies, and the errors, be the same more or less, that have crept into the text." Again, he says: "There are those who know very little of the Word of God that is in the Bible, and whose lives show no trace of its sanctifying power, but who are full of a kind of superstitious veneration for the book. They seem to regard it as a sort of charm or talisman that it is well to have about them. The late, but not much lamented, Tweed read it every day for so many minutes in prison, and occasionally looked up from what seemed to be his devotions, to swear at his attendant. Doubtless he regarded the book as a sort of fetish, and the fixing his eyes upon its pages for a little while every day was a meritorious observance."

What is revelation? It is "the art of revealing divine truth." It is "that which is revealed by God to men." The strictest theologians are unable to add anything to these definitions. No book, therefore, is necessarily required to complete the act. Revelation is one thing, the writing of Scripture another. The former is divine, the latter is human.

What is inspiration? The inspired writers do not undertake to say. Uninspired Webster sets it down as "Specifically, a supernatural, divine influence on the prophets, apostles, or sacred writers, by which they were qualified to communicate moral or religious truth with authority; a miraculous influence which qualifies men to receive and communicate divine truth." Even if this definition is correct, we are still free to conclude that inspiration may be something quite different from the Bible.

What is the Bible? The Bible itself does not tell—does not even mention the word. The dictionary says it is "the sacred volume, in which are contained the revel-

ations of God, the principles of Christian faith, and the rules of practice." This definition is as clear as we are likely to get, and yet it is wonderfully vague. It seems that we are in possession of a book, or rather a multiplicity of books bound together, dating back to various and widely different periods, and bearing marks of a numerous authorship, which *contains* revelations from God. It is not denied that the same volume also contains things which are *not* revelations from God. How shall we separate the one from the other? This is the great difficulty. Catholicism looks it squarely in the face and consistently says: "Before the Bible can be regarded as divinely authoritative, it must be submitted to a divine authority for examination and interpretation. The Catholic church, through its divinely appointed agents, is that authority." When we observe the kind of work which Protestants do in trying to handle the Bible, and the ten hundred conflicting dogmas they derive from it, we wonder if, after all, they are very much wiser than the papal hierarchy.

If we will only treat the Bible honestly and rationally as we treat other books, submitting it to the same rules of criticism which apply to general history and to moral and religious teaching, we shall find that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are not only worthy of careful and prayerful study, but that they answer a human need which nothing else could supply.

In the first place, we must candidly acknowledge before the people that verbal inspiration has no support in reason or authority. An intensely human tendency, greatly to be deprecated, is that of exaggeration. The Bible abounds with it. To cite a few instances: "The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered his voice, the earth melted." "His lightnings lightened



the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." Again: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord come, that great and notable day."

Christ is represented as saying to the apostles that they should be hated of all men. Some men do not hate them. "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." Paul attached so little importance to this warning that he did not hesitate to call men fools who questioned the doctrine of the resurrection. If it be so very wicked to call a man a fool, how is it such a great virtue to regard him as being totally depraved—the biggest kind of a fool? Again, Christ is reported as saying: "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, also, he cannot be my disciple." Unless this language is extravagant, the Master has very few disciples today, and these few would be a disgrace to any cause. "Ye are of your father, the devil" is accredited to Christ, but at the present time, it would not pass for a Christian utterance. "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garments and buy one," is extravagant language for one who advocates non-resistance to evil. When Mark says that "all the city was gathered together at the door," he probably exaggerates a little. Now these citations are sufficient to show that the Scriptures are not free from extravagant statements. This being settled, why should one be called an infidel for believing that what is said of Judas—that it had been good for him if he had never been born—may possibly be slightly exaggerated? If Jonah enlarged upon the truth when he said he was in hell forever,—namely, three days and three nights,—

may not the term, "everlasting punishment," be taken with some allowance? If the promise was made that the Abrahamic covenant should *never* come to an end, notwithstanding that it afterward ceased to exist, is it unlawful to suggest that those whose sin shall "*never* be forgiven" may, nevertheless, exercise a slight hope, and repose some struggling trust in the infinite goodness of God and the universal character of Christ's mission?

I am aware that I am dealing with an argument which cuts both ways. It will be said that if "eternal punishment" is not to be taken in the largest possible sense, neither is "eternal life," which occurs in the same verse. But I know of no law which requires that one exaggeration shall be employed to balance another. If "punishment" and "life" are essentially of the same nature, it may be reasonably affirmed that the qualifying adjective has the same degree of intensity. It is well known that the Greek word from which "everlasting," or "eternal," is scripturally derived, is sufficiently plastic to fit itself either to the finite or infinite, and may apply to a period of longer or shorter duration. Again, I shall be reminded that since the word "all" is sometimes biblically employed in an exaggerated form, we cannot postulate universal salvation on the ground that numerous texts set forth that "all" shall be saved. The point is well made. Language is such that there is no particular passage of Scripture which proves beyond doubt the salvation of all mankind. Certainly, there is no passage which disproves it. This being the case, there is little or no use we can make of the Bible for doctrinal purposes, until we go deeper than its words and discover its general trend, its deverbilized spirit. As the Catholic must have something greater than the Bible, before the Bible itself can be mastered, so, also, must



the Protestant. I like the idea of having a pope who dares to assert for himself an authority superior to that of books. A living soul should be hotter with divine truth than a dead page. Better a man than a manuscript. We should have more popes. One is not enough for earth's vast population. Perhaps one would be enough—for one: that is all. Every person should be a pope unto himself. Unless the soul's inner light is greater than the light which is shed from texts, the Bible will be read to no purpose.

The moment the dogma of verbal inspiration was surrendered, reason leaped into the throne of theology. Superstition received its death blow. As soon as a man comes to know that the language of the Bible is not supernatural, that it was not supernaturally employed by any of its writers, that it is intensely human in all respects, and consequently erroneous in many particulars, he will believe no portion of it which does not square with his best convictions and most enlightened judgment. Ecclesiasts may deplore this, but it is irremediable. There is no middle ground between miraculous verbal inspiration and theological self-dependence. To compel "faith" to bridge the chasm is a cruel outrage on human nature. When scholarship forced the church to abandon the old idea of inspired language, a great deal more was involved in that abandonment than the Church, even yet, is willing to part with. The average minister still employs texts as though mere *words* were sacred, and weaves them into sermons and prayers with all the confidence of the middle ages.

We fully believe in revelation. It is a larger fact than most people are wont to suppose. Max Muller, in his lectures on the "Sciences of Religion," describes eight religions that have canonical books, to wit: Brah-

minism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Mosaism, Moham-  
medanism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Latoism;  
and says that the real problem is, not how a revelation  
is possible, but how a veil could ever have been drawn  
between the creature and the Creator, intercepting from  
the human mind the rays of divine truth. We freely  
concede that the Bible is immensely superior to any  
other "sacred book;" yet this does not estop us from hold-  
ing that it is far from perfect. Absolute truth is such a  
subtle essence that no form of words can hold it captive.  
The effervescence of the Living Water refuses to re-  
main in the earthen vessel. The delicate perfume of  
the heavenly blossom cannot be caught by the chemist's  
cunning art. When we have said our best, the real  
truth is not wholly spoken. The Bible is a very worthy  
attempt, but a partial failure. Revelation is not con-  
fined to its few pages.

"There is a lesson in each flower,  
A story in each stream and bower;  
In every herb on which we tread  
Are written words which, rightly read,  
Will lead us from earth's fragrant sod  
To hope and holiness in God."

The New York Independent is to be commended  
for this utterance: "Truth is to be estimated by its in-  
trinsic worth, and not because it is found either inside  
or outside of the Bible. It is elevated above books and  
independent of all records."

It is a legal maxim that "The life of the law is the  
reason of the law." In the largest possible sense this  
is true of God's law. Hence, in the most fearless man-  
ner, reason must pass sentence on the Book. Even the  
new, or Oxford version, is unreliable in both form and  
substance. In 1 Cor. vii.: 36, Saint Paul is made to sanc-  
tion the most abominable incest, namely, that, under

certain circumstances, a man should marry his own daughter. We see, therefore, that the Bible, even in its modern form, is very much like a drug store where wholesome medicines and deadly poisons occupy the same shelves. This is all very well if we can be assured that the clerks who handle the bottles and the patients who take the prescriptions are not dangerously ignorant or grossly careless.

It is well to remember that the volume which we have made into a fetich did not come by miraculous appointment. If Christ had designed us to learn religion from a book, he, himself, would probably have written one. He did not even command his disciples to write one, nor did he once intimate that one was coming in which the Word of God should be revealed. According to Rev. Samuel Davidson, D. D., no book of the New Testament was termed Scripture or deemed more sacred than other religious books before A. D. 170. Then, there was a great number of theological manuscripts, from which a volume could be compiled. The reasons why some came to be accepted and others rejected have never been given to the public. For example, the uninspired authorities have rejected the Epistle of Barnabas, although the early churches accepted it as genuine, and Barnabas was "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost." And what can be said of Luke and Mark more than was said of Clement, "whose name is in the Book of Life," but whose Epistle is not in the sacred canon? He certainly has as much right to be heard as that notable Old Testament author, of whom Dr. Adam Clarke says: "Who can read the account of idolatrous Solomon, who, from the whole evidence of the sacred history, died in his sins, without trembling?" The inference of this is that he whom God especially chose to lead mankind into

the paths of salvation is, himself, writhing in eternal torment. Then, too, the various parts of our present Bible were not brought together without great differences of opinion, much bitter controversy, and considerable opposition. Even so wise a man as Martin Luther rejected the valuable Epistle of St. James; and the scholarship of the church is still unsettled, concerning not only James, but Hebrews, Jude, Second Peter, Second and Third John, and the book of Revelation. Catholicism accepts the Apochrypha, the same as other books, while Protestantism, which, comparatively speaking, was born but yesterday, dares to tell the Mother Church to her face that she is all wrong in so doing.

The removal of idols is a thankless task. People will say, Why tear down the Bible, unless you have something better to put in its place? We have something better; namely, the Bible itself—the Bible de-idolized—the inspired spirit in the place of the uninspired letter. Most persons would much rather hold to the views to which they have been accustomed than to exchange them for absolute truth. A lady wrote to the Old Testament revisers an earnest plea against a change in one particular verse in Proverbs, because it had been a favorite, to quote her own words, “with both of my dear husbands who are now dead.” Had the question been submitted to popular vote, it would have been decided to retain the closing words of the Lord’s prayer in the new version of the New Testament, notwithstanding it is well known by biblical students that the phrase “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, amen,” is not in the original. Give us just what we have had, though truth falls, is the demand of most people. Give us the Bible as it has been, and all the opinions concerning it just as they are, even if we are



utterly ignorant of its contents, seems to be the hue and cry. One man thought the good Book was so sacred that it was sacrilegious to revise it at all, yet he knew so little of what it contains, that he hunted all through it to find the text "Make hay while the sun shines."

I have heard it preached that it is our duty to believe the Bible, even in those instances where it plainly contradicts our reason and is clearly opposed to our common sense. We are asked to exercise the same kind of credulity that the ancient Greek did, to whom Wendell Phillips refers in his lecture on the Lost Arts: A traveller one day met an old acquaintance and exclaimed: "Why, I heard that you were dead."

"Well," answered the other, "you see that I am not dead."

"I see nothing of the kind," replied the first speaker, "for I would believe the man who told me a great deal quicker than I would you."

This is not a bit more absurd than to be asked to believe a book a great deal quicker than we would our senses.

Another anecdote given in the same lecture may be made to illustrate a point in the same connection: A man who was very desirous to know how he would look when he was dead, closed his eyes and then stood before the mirror, that he might see for himself what kind of a spectacle he presented. Those who try to read the Bible, without depending on their natural reason and practical philosophy, belong to this man's tribe.

Whenever the Scriptures are read for other purposes than that of coming into spiritual communion with God, they are not holy to the reader. To read the book for history or for the sake of fitting one's self for controversy, is to read nothing but a common book. How

much of this is done. How little of real revelation is ever read!

"Do you ever make use of the Bible?" inquired a minister of a negro. "Yes, sir," was the reply, "I frequently strap my razor upon it."

In so doing, he put it to a more honorable use than do those controversialists who peruse its pages simply to find whetstones on which to sharpen their weapons of debate.

"No," said the editor, pointing to a large file of books, "those are not for reading, but for reviewing." The book of books is often treated in the same way. The worst of it is that the persons who pretend to be so wondrous wise concerning the "infinitely superior merits" of the volume, get their opinions ready-made from the "reviews."

When will the common people learn that Protestantism puts the Bible into their own hands to do with as they please? Priestcraft no longer owns it. A sharp-witted, but unscrupulous New England Yankee, happening to be visiting in the West during the great overflow of the Mississippi, when thousands of cords of drift-wood were let loose, made a bargain with a gang of idlers to give them half the logs they would fish out and save. This enterprise netted him quite a large sum of money, simply because the laborers were ignorant of the fact that their employer had originally no more claim to the lost property than they themselves had. Thus have sectarian commentators and expounders of Scripture robbed the people of their just rights. They have put a "Thus saith the Lord" to their own opinions. Had they not made a muddle of the whole business by magnifying their different dogmas far above the spirit of truth, we might, perhaps, tolerate them on the ground of their having been at school somewhat longer than other people.



As it is, we will be bound by no commentary on earth. The advice which Prof. Agassiz gave to the students who accompanied him on his scientific tour through Brazil was excellent: "Leave your books behind. We are to study nature first hand." In these words we find the key to the great naturalist's voluminous learning and wisdom.

A million dollars would readily be given for an original manuscript of the New Testament. It is best that there is none to be had for love or money. It would be worshiped. Every pen-mark would be transferred bodily to the mind and conscience of Christianity. The letter would be exalted. The spirit would suffer. The carelessness or indifference of the early Christians, in neglecting to preserve the actual writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, Paul, Peter, James or Jude, turns out most wisely.

Inspiration is humanity's greatest truth. It says: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It accompanied the writing of the Bible, it must accompany its reading. As someone has said, we should be inspired to look through the book, not at it. "If a man looks through his telescope, then he sees worlds beyond; but if he looks at his telescope, then he does not see anything but that."

On some paper there are letters in water colors which are never seen until the paper is held up to the light. On other paper, there is invisible writing which nothing but the heat of fire can make legible. The Bible contains many spiritual truths which we do not discover until we hold the book up to the light of the eternal sun. Sometimes, alas, we must stand by the open door of the fiery furnace of affliction, in order that the Word of God may be clearly revealed to us.

In conclusion, is it not enough to satisfy all the demands of Christian reason, faith and conscience, when we believe "that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest, and final destination of mankind." There is no denying it, the grandest truths ever uttered by man are to be found in the Bible. If it be asked how any one can be assured that he has rightly separated truth from error, if both are contained in the same volume, it can only be answered in the words of the Book itself: "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding."

MIRACLES.



## MIRACLES.

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An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.

—Matt. xii.: 39.

The old-fashioned "miracle" has disappeared from the Bible. In its place the new version gives us four words, namely: "wonder," "work," "sign," "power." None of these necessarily imply anything miraculous. While they take the place of "miracle," their popular meaning is radically different. At a single bound, the English Bible has gone far ahead of the Church. Yet, even in this advancement, it has merely overtaken Saint Augustine, who declared his disbelief in any event contrary to nature. Jesus himself, as shown by his language in our text, deprecated the common demand of his age for an exhibition of the unnatural. Not only does he reproach those who ask for a "sign," but if, occasionally, he consents to humor their unworthy craving, he frequently astonishes them by commanding that they tell no man what they have thus witnessed. It is evident that he does not wish to be known as a thaumaturgist. That his audiences fully believed he could and did perform miracles is not surprising, when we consider that they had been educated to believe in Moses and Aaron, and that there was, as yet, no knowledge of science among them. They probably believed in the natural just as firmly as we do, but they regarded the *unnatural* as quite natural. They supposed that all Providen-

tial action was direct action; they had no conception of the indirect. We have learned that the very opposite of this is always true. What living astronomer could be made to believe for one moment that the Almighty ever takes hold of a planet or comet directly and pushes it through the sky? Why is it that men can tell, a thousand years in advance, the exact moment of an eclipse? It is because they know there will be no direct interference by the hand of God with the movements of heavenly bodies. What botanist could be convinced that God ever laid hold of a plant directly or that he ever added a root, leaf, bud or blossom, by direct manipulation? Why not apply the same reasoning to the affairs of mind or soul?

It is said that the miracles of old were necessary in order to convince people of the existence of God and of the power of his word. If this be so, why should all the *genuine* ones have been confined to olden Jews and early Christians? There were, and still are, a good many other people in the world who need to be convinced of the existence of a personal God and of the divine nature of the Christian religion. Again, if miracles are so very important, as we have been lead to suppose, how is it that those who witnessed them most habitually went to the dogs at last? According to Jewish literature the Jews were the witnesses of more miracles than any other people on earth, yet they adopted the worst forms of idolatry, and wandered so far astray that ten tribes became hopelessly lost, while the other two were carried captive to Babylon. If miracles were absolutely necessary in order to prove the Messiahship of Christ, how does it happen that the very Jews before whom the so-called miracles were wrought never accepted him, while the Gentile nations, who did not witness any of the miracles, came at last to be his disciples? The great fact is that no exhi-



bition of strange power would ever spiritualize one. George Fox wisely said that though he read of Christ and God, he knew them only by the like spirit in his own soul. If Christ were to appear at this time and cut the earth in two like an orange and put it together again, without bringing harm to any one, that act would not convince me that he is the Son of God; but if there be some divinity in me which recognizes the divinity in him, that is enough: I am convinced.

Another question: If miracles can be depended on to persuade the world that Jesus was the true Messiah, how shall we explain the fact that he warned his followers against putting their trust in that kind of evidence? "For," said he, "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."

Again, it would seem as though there must have been only a limited reliance on Christ's spiritual influence and natural virtue, if something more than these was thought to be necessary. But, if something more *was* necessary, is it not a little singular that miracles should have been selected for the purpose, when, of all things in the world, they are the easiest doubted, and when, too, the world's literature was already filled with accounts of them, and every religion was already depending on them for the proof of its superior claims?

Will some one give us more light on miracles? To what people have they been limited? When, if ever, did they cease? Why did they cease? According to Jacob Boehme, "Witchcraft is an illegitimate miracle; a miracle is legitimate witchcraft." Is—that—so?

Tertullian, as one of the Christian Fathers, ought to be worthy of some confidence, and he says that, before John was banished to the isle of Patmos, he was thrown

into a cauldron of boiling oil, and that he came forth unhurt. Why should we not believe this? Would it not furnish an additional prop for dogmatical Christianity? In doubting it, is there not danger of weakening the argument which supports biblical wonders?

It is also related by the Apostolic Fathers, concerning Polycarp, that just as he was about to be burned at the stake, the fire shaped itself over him, forming an arch, and he was then pierced with a mysterious dagger, on which came forth a dove and so much blood that it entirely quenched the flames. As this account was religiously told, and, by the early church, was religiously believed, why have we neglected to urge it upon the mind and conscience of the modern world? In our treatment of miracles, discriminating against this one and that, are we not strangely inconsistent?

In the days of Irenæus, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was very far from being esteemed an uncommon event. Coming down to the eighth and twelfth centuries, we have the testimony of the venerable Bede and the holy Bernard that the age of such miracles had not yet passed.

Shakespeare seems to have sanctioned a belief in other than Bible accounts of the same nature. He says :

“In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mighty Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.”

Systematically organized Christianity appears to owe its origin to Constantine, who, in waging war against Paganism, was decisively influenced by seeing, as he says, the luminous trophy of the cross, placed above the meridian sun, and inscribed with the following words: **BY THIS, CONQUER.** In view of the importance of con-

verting the Roman world to Christianity, why should it be deemed a thing incredible, if miracles are to be accepted at all, for this one to be true? Why does it not receive a more hearty sanction from those who regard Constantine, bloody criminal that he was, as a saint of no mean quality?

Perhaps a New England miracle will receive a more kindly reception at our hands. Here it is in the history of Cape Cod, Vol. 1, page 198. It relates to a man whose wife was hung as a witch at Charlestown in the year 1633. Soon after the execution the bereaved husband took passage for Barbadoes. The vessel he was in was observed to be dangerously rolling, when he was suspicioned, apprehended and committed to confinement, "after which," says the historian, "the ship ceased rolling." This is not quite equal to the Jonah story, but inasmuch as it is native-born, we ought to be very proud of it.

Genuine miracles abound. Man himself is a miracle. Spirituality is a marvel. God is a mystery. Yet all of these are facts. Jesus was super-human in the same sense that his teaching was super-excellent. In the popular thought, miracles are modes of action. They come and go. They transcend the understanding of man in order that they may the more effectually enlighten his understanding. Strange delusion! Shall a person be convinced by that which is shrouded in darkness, rather than by the lessons of every day wisdom? Will the wise God put a premium on confusion of ideas and intellectual defeat? Life is for study, research, discipline. When a wonder is presented for our consideration, it is our duty to consider it, reason foremost. If we make it a substitute for study, rather than an inducement to study all the harder, we make it a mental hindrance.

Does the teacher in our schools stand in the class-room giving difficult problems, only to astonish his pupils and magnify himself? No: neither does God thus conduct the school of humanity. In the high department of spiritual instruction, there is no such thing as "showing off." True, the Creator has given the world some difficult problems to solve, propounded some very hard questions: while we, entirely misapprehending his purpose in so doing, have slothfully contented ourselves in crying out, "Miracle! Oh how great is the miracle-worker!"

It is the duty of man to search into the ways and means by which all the works of God are wrought. If it be not sacrilegious to study the laws which regulate the movements of heavenly bodies, to analyze the "dust" of which the first man was made, to explain the relationship of raindrops and sunbeams which constitutes the rainbow, and which proves that the "bow of promise" must have been a common occurrence even before the flood, then it is not sacrilegious to fit a rationalistic interpretation to ancient records. History has no more rights than science. The account of a miracle is not half so sacred as the account of noble deeds in everyday life. One may lay hands upon it and still escape with his life. Why should we belong to that class of whom Fontenelle speaks? "Numbers of people," he says, "are always standing with open mouths in a silly wonderment, enveloped in an obscurity, to which they bow with respect; \* \* \* and we may be sure that a thing loses its value in their eyes as soon as it can be explained."

We can still repeat the question which was asked by Cicero: "Since when has this secret force disappeared? has it not been since men have become less credulous?" Alas! it has not yet disappeared. A motley multitude



still stand with mouths ajar to hear and believe anything, no matter how absurd, which purports to come from an *authority*. And how full the world is, and ever has been, of queer *authorities*!

If the age of miracles has passed, what is all this we hear about supernatural visitations of the Holy Ghost at revival meetings, and astonishing conversions of hardened sinners? If this work is wrought by a greater than human power, how does it happen that the spurious cases—where the conversion is simply a seven days' wonder, and the sinner backslides as soon as the spring work opens—are attended at the beginning by precisely the same outward phenomena which accompany the cases of permanent duration? "Why is it," said a fond young wife to her husband, "that you do not pay me the same devoted and affectionate attention that you did before we were married?" The husband gazed out into the street, and replied: "Do you see that man running with all his might, and hear him shouting at the top of his voice, while he pursues the horse-car? Very well: when he overtakes the car, and secures a place therein, he will neither shout nor run, nor make any further effort, but just sit still and fold his hands." How graphically this illustrates the deplorable coldness and indifference which, too often, postdates marriage. How equally graphically it illustrates the *sobering off*, which, in most instances, follows the spiritually intoxicating effects of "getting religion." There is then no more boisterous hailing of the chariot of salvation; no more rushing, crowding, and pleading; no more groans, tears, and excitement, nothing but sitting quietly on a soft cushion, and the occasional, but not too occasional, payment of a nickel to the conductor. Nothing in this world, *except* a miracle, will ever *re-convert*, or really convert at all, such a miserable, worthless passenger.

If the age of miracles has ceased, why are prayers still offered whose answers would surely involve, if not the turning of water into wine, or crumbs into loaves, something equally great? Man's thinking, studying, and reasoning seem to be wholly based on natural law, while his praying is based on something else.

The verdict of the church certainly is that miracles have *not* ceased. Still, the questions which she is asked to answer are just as difficult as those already propounded. If miracles may still be wrought, why are thousands of little innocent, fatherless, motherless children allowed to rend the air with heart-rending cries for bread? If, on two occasions, thousands of people—mere curiosity seekers, to whom the miracle was of no benefit, “because their hearts were hardened”—were allowed to fill themselves to repletion on almost nothing, why have other thousands of devout, praying men and women been left to starve? If it were an easy matter to turn two or three barrels of water to so much wine, in order that a merry wedding party might continue their festivities, it would seem to be quite reasonable to expect that, now and then, a single glass of wine might be miraculously turned to water for the sake of some grieving wife or unfortunate child, whose very life is endangered by the husband's insane libations. A boy was once soundly whipped after having performed a very meritorious act, on the ground that since he had now shown what he could do, he was deserving of severe punishment for not always having conducted himself in the same way. Many persons are inclined to reason in a similar manner with reference to miracles. Instead of being thankful for those in which they are asked to believe, they bitterly complain that such a very valuable force is so seldom employed. The unaccountable partiality of Providence seems to be always staring them in the face.



If miracles exist at all, we need something in these days of science, rationalism, and philosophy entirely unlike the kind of which we are accustomed to hear. We want one that shall compel such a man as Herbert Spencer to believe in special providences. For example, let Sunday, or the Lord's day, be always cloudless, without regard to meteorological laws, and I imagine the time would come when the majority of scientists and everybody else would regard it as their solemn duty to attend church every Sabbath.

Whether we like it or not, old-fashioned supernaturalism is coming every day to be more and more abandoned. Myriads of good men in the Christian church, down to a very recent period, have seen divine warnings to repentance in comets. Europe has been frequently plunged into alarm by them. Shakespeare, Milton and Luther regarded them as portents. Increase Mather called one of them "Heaven's alarm to the world;" and it was not till 1759 that Prof. Winthrop of Harvard acknowledged the victory of science over superstition by saying in a lecture that "to be thrown into a panic whenever a comet appears, betrays a weakness unbecoming a reasonable being."

Aside from sudden conversions and remarkable answers to prayer, no modern miracles are recognized by the church. *Old* miracles and old wine are still regarded as having special virtues. Concerning the ancient miracles, we are in about the same frame of mind as that of the lawyer when he said to the deponent: "Since you were an eye witness, I shall have to believe that you actually saw what you describe, but I am sure I should not have believed it, if I had seen it myself."

Nothing which I have said need throw any discredit on the Bible. It is a much more sensible book than its

friends have made it out to be. It never asks us to believe in that which is intellectually indigestible, and which could lead to no other result than moral dyspepsia. True, it presents us with some unique developments, but one may readily accept these without violating any requirement of rationalism. The inspired authors were frequently inspired by appearances, rather than by realities. To them the sky was a "scroll" that could be rolled up, the earth stood still while the sun "rose" and "set," and things *were* what they seemed. As to the "signs" and "wonders," for which everybody was looking with big eyes, nothing was easier than to magnify them to the requirements of the urgent demand of the eye. Bishop Marsh, in his explanation of the discrepancies of Matthew, Mark and Luke, says that "John, who was inspired as well as they, had the advantage of a better memory." If memory, better or worse, is allowed to accompany inspiration, there is some room for rationalistic doubt concerning the exactness of those descriptions which deal with things hard to explain and much harder to believe. Besides, as was shown in the discourse on Revelation, the Bible authors were not prohibited from employing exaggerated forms of speech. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the Hebrew and Messianic chroniclers were, from custom and nationality, peculiarly poetical. Their inspiration was based largely upon the text: "I have multiplied visions and used similitudes." All of which means that the "signs" of the sacred record need not be literally interpreted.

What a beautiful story is that of the Holy Grail! How exquisite the moral! How many aspirations it has spiritualized and how many noble yearnings it has called forth! Why? Because only its moral equivalent has been imposed on our faith. Why not treat the marvel-

ous accounts of the Bible in the same manner? In this way alone can thoughtful persons believe them with their whole mind and might, and in this way alone can they be made sources of profit to any living soul. To me, the Bible is nothing, worse than nothing, only so far as I can spiritualize it. If I understand it at all, that is just what it asks me to do, and that is just what, to the best of my ability, I will do.

Take, for example, the account of what occurred at the marriage feast of Cana. If you tell me that water was literally converted into wine, I do not believe a word of it, but if you tell me that the lesson of the story is that Christ, and those who possess his spirit, have the power to convert the things of every day life, things which are as common as water, into the wine of gladness, my soul at once recognizes the heavenly truth and joyfully accepts the miracle. Through the influence of Christianity, hovels are made to appear like palaces, the beggar's fare is more delicious than the ambrosia of the gods, sackcloth constitutes a royal robe, peasants' children are princes to the manor born, abject poverty is great wealth, plain bread is luxurious, and pure cold water is health and exhilaration.

Consider the miracles of the loaves and fishes: I want no religion which requires me to believe that the great fields and prairies of the world are not really necessary for the production of corn, that sowing and reaping might be dispensed with, that the slow processes of growth and development are nothing but unworthy substitutes for the faith and power we might possess, and that "much grass" is entirely useless, except to sit down upon. I resort at once to the moral equivalent of this "mighty sign." Jesus, and his followers to whom the promise was given that they should do even "greater

works" than they had already seen, are capable of taking the bread of life,—the loaves of eternal truth,—of which they may seem at first to possess only an insignificant quantity, and of supplying therewith the wants of the hungry world. The more of this wonderful bread that they give, the more will it increase in their possession, till, at the last, no twelve baskets would begin to hold all the fragments that are left. These, too, are well worthy to be gathered up, "that nothing be lost."

Christ cursing the fig-tree! How harsh it sounds! Do you reverently open your Bible and tell me that the meek and lowly Jesus, being hungry, went to a fig-tree for fruit, knowing that it was not the season for figs, and then, because his wants were not supplied, stood there and cursed the innocent tree, even employing his miraculous power to bring upon it the eternal vengeance of God? Would it not have been as reasonable for him to serve an oak or a hemlock in the same way? There are some who take delight in ridiculing Christ because of his conduct on this occasion. Others there are, who, loving Jesus, and respecting the Bible, would fain discover a deeper meaning to the story than that which generally obtains. I, too, am conscious of a sincere affection for the Great Teacher, and will not consent, therefore, to believe in any interpretation of his behavior which could only degrade him in the estimation of the world. To my mind, Christ had too much practical common sense—was too wise a man—to be ignorant of the seasons, or to condemn a tree for not bearing fruit out of season. The Scriptures of old had already taught that "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven;" a time to plant and a time to pluck; and surely the Son of God would have been likely to pay proper respect to this edict of nature's God.



The fig-tree in question was situated at, or near, Bethphage, or *place of figs*. Soil and climate here being especially favorable to the production of this fruit, it is fair to suppose that Bethphage was the one place of all others for *early* figs. It is stated that Jesus went to this place which he saw afar off, if haply he might find anything thereon. He could not find what he wanted in the market because the time of figs, that is, the regular fig season, had not yet arrived. But here, at this place of *early figs*, here in this secluded, sunny nook of the Mount of Olives, he might reasonably expect to find what he sought. This expectation not being realized, he caused the tree which bore nothing but leaves to wither.

Now let us recall the whole situation. Jesus had been up to Jerusalem morally prospecting. What had he found? A den of thieves in the very temple of Jehovah. Political and spiritual corruption was plainly palpable. There were the Scribes and Pharisees, self-righteous, bigoted, superstitious, hypocritical, and indecent. At this moment, Jesus fully realized the sad truth that his own people, the Jewish nation, would not accept him. They who should have been the early figs, the first-fruit, of Christianity, offered nothing to his hungry soul but leaves—the hopeless leaves of worldliness.

The Jewish mode of teaching and learning important lessons, was unlike our own. Every strange phenomenon, appearance or circumstance, was utilized for pointing a moral or adorning a tale. On this fruitless fig-tree Jesus found room to hang the rich fruit of eternal truth. It was his grandest opportunity. His curse was not one of epithet or of anger; nor did the killing of the tree involve any miraculous act. He might have asked some one to dig around it and cut off its roots, or he, himself,



might have girdled it. Of course these suppositions will be piously sneered at by all those whose preconceived convictions and lifelong prejudices in favor of miracles, are as immovable as the rock of Gibraltar, and as unyielding as the law of the Medes and Persians.

In that withered tree, Judea, the Bethphage of the Lord's husbandry, should have read its approaching doom. It was an object-lesson at once thrillingly forcible and graphically true. As a Christian church, blessed with liberal views concerning the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, this lesson of the fig-tree should come home to us. It is our sacred privilege to bring forth the first fruits of a grand awakening in the religious world. Neglecting, rejecting, or abusing our trust, the work will finally be given into the more loyal hands of others, while we shall stand by the highway of human progress, bearing nothing but withered leaves—the curse of unfaithfulness upon us. God forbid!

VICTORY.



## VICTORY.

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But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ. —1 Cor. xv.:57.

The question we are about to consider is, does this text state an universal truth? Will the time ever come when every one, as regards its essential spirit, can repeat it? Will the victory over death, both physical and moral, be complete? Or, is Jehovah's promise founded on nothing but a "sentimental hope" when he says: "By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." And were the Bible writers merely indulging in poetical fancy when they wrote:

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

"For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

"And there shall be no more curse."

"Behold, all souls are mine."

"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?"

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and

bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior; who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

"For the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies."

"To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him."

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

As Roman fathers sometimes took their sons to witness the drunken debaucheries of inebriates, in order that the loathsomeness of the carousals might serve as a warning against intemperance, so it may not be amiss to quote some of the opinions of men who are opposed to the doctrine of universal salvation. It not infrequently occurs that truth gains its greatest triumph through contrast. A positive denial of Universalism on the part of one man, may pave the way for its reception on the part of another. Here then is the testimony.

The Westminster Confession of Faith audaciously dogmatizes thus: "Neither are any other redeemed, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." Why a father should "adopt" a child who is already his own offspring is difficult of comprehension. But we forget! He is to adopt some of the children of the Adversary—his eternal enemy.

The Andover Creed gently murmurs in this wise: "The wicked will awake to shame and everlasting contempt, and with devils be plunged into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone forever and ever." What about these devils? Were they born of devils? Where and how did they originate? Did a God once



suffer and die that they, too, might be saved? If not, why not? Did infinite love stop short before it reached them?

The Congregationalists' Confession of Faith, adopted by the General Association of New York, presents this as its fourteenth article: "The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfectly holy, and immediately taken to glory. At the end of the world there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a final judgment of all mankind, when the saints shall be publicly acquitted by Christ, the judge, and admitted to endless glory: and those who have continued in their sins shall be doomed to endless punishment." It may be well to remark right here that, although there has been recently published a new Congregationalist statement of doctrine, which may, or may not, be adopted by individual churches of that denomination, there is nothing therein which conflicts with the above quotation. In the new creed, this language is employed in Article IV.: "We believe that God *would* have all men to return to him, etc." Is it not a little singular that the "will have" of Saint Paul's Epistle to Timothy becomes "would have" when put into a creed. The implication is that what the Almighty *would have*, he may not be quite able to execute. The chief superiority of the latest interpretation of the Congregationalists' Confession of Faith, consists in the numerous things which it leaves unsaid. Rev. Joseph Cook, who will undoubtedly be elected to the office of pope, as soon as Protestantism decides to have one, and who will certainly be infallible in the estimation of at least *one* American citizen, has decided that the new creed is "semi-Universalist and semi-Unitarian." I think myself that it is altogether too semi.

The Presbyterian Standard ruthlessly pitches the

great majority of mankind into endless perdition in this wise: "They, who, never having heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of Nature or the laws of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Savior only of his body, the Church." According to this, eternal woe is mainly the result of misfortune, or the unhappy accident of having been born in the wrong part of the world.

The American Board of Commissions of Foreign Missions, corroborates the above view in these words: "To send the Gospel to the Heathen is a work of great exigency. Within the last thirty years a whole generation of five hundred millions have gone down to eternal death." It is because such monstrous falsehoods as this are unblushingly uttered that missionaries are not always provided with a sufficient fund to carry forward their work. The refusal indicates no bad heart on the part of those who are asked to give, but is simply an indignant protest against an idea which blasphemes the love of God. The missionaries who hold such opinions are the most hopelessly benighted heathen.

That the horrid doctrines which disgrace theology are the result of a too literal rendering of the mere drapery of Bible truth is quite apparent. For example, Jerome says: "If the dead be not raised with flesh and bones, how can the damned, after the judgment, gnash their teeth in hell?" Sure enough: and what are those to do who have artificial teeth?

Philo says: "He who suffers from incurable vice must endure its dire penalties, banished into the place of the impious, until the whole of eternity." We quite agree with this author. All that he says is, that an in-

curable disease can't be cured. Wonderful statement! But would it not be well to first show that there is such a thing as an incurable vice. When the Great Physician has put his fullest powers to the utmost test, must his sorrowful cry be heard throughout the chambers of the universe, Baffled! Baffled! Baffled!

Perhaps Suso has drawn the most vivid representation of everlasting torment ever penned by the ingenuity of man, as follows: "Give us a millstone, says the damned, as large as the whole earth, and so wide in circumference as to touch the sky all around, and let a little bird come in a hundred thousand years, and pick off a small particle of stone, not larger than the tenth part of a grain of millet, and after another hundred thousand years let him come again, so that in ten hundred thousand years, he would pick off as much as a grain of millet, we wretched sinners would desire nothing but that thus the stone might have an end, and thus our pains also; yet even that cannot be." Will my self-styled Orthodox friend try the experiment of fully grasping this description of the punishment of the unrighteous? If, for one moment, he can clearly comprehend its terrible significance, it will result in his conversion to Universalism, or to demonolatry, or to lunacy.

We turn now from these sickening exhibitions of evangelical conceit, to the hopeful songs of the true Evangelists.\*

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\*It will be observed that I frequently use the words "Orthodox," "evangelical," etc., according to their popular acceptance, rather than according to their strict etymological meaning. If "Orthodox" means "sound in the Christian faith," and if "evangelical" properly relates only to that which is in the Gospel or Good News, it may yet come to pass that the promulgators of *bad news* will cease to denounce their neighbors as un-orthodox and un-evangelical.

Listen to Tennyson while he sings of

“That God which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off, divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.”

The author of “Chronicles of the Schonberg-Cotta Family” speaks grandly, as follows :

“And in that perfect marriage day,  
All earth’s lost love shall live once more;  
All lack and loss shall pass away,  
And all find all not found before;  
Till all the worlds shall live and glow  
In the Great Love’s great overflow.”

The question has just been discussed in a theological circle, Is God happy? If one is to judge by all the sermons and prayers to which the good Lord has been urged to listen, one would be likely to say, No, God is not happy. Again, there is no possible way in which the doctrine of endless misery can be turned so as to leave the Almighty in any other than a most pitiable condition. But what spectacle is this! The universe—the Boundless Soul of infinite space—suffering forever because of the rebellious souls of men. Then let all the saints be decent enough to suffer with him.

Yet, in view of actual suffering from the beginning to the end of time, why should not the Almighty be unhappy? I visit a sick chamber and am surprised to find a mother whose countenance is radiant with joy, while her sick child is tossing upon a bed of pain. “How is this?” I say; “You so exceedingly cheerful while in the very presence of a suffering invalid! Have you no heart?” “Oh,” she exclaims, in sweetly ringing tones, “the doctor has just been here and assures me that all danger has passed, that my dear one will certainly recover and be in possession of all the blessings of perfect health.”

And this is why God is happy. He knows that in the whole moral universe there is not a fatal disease. He knows that every one of his children will certainly recover. Once assure the mother that the babe will never get well, then if she can be happy she is not a mother, but a devil incarnate. Once let it be proclaimed in heaven that some of the children of our Great Father are sick unto death, and that death endless, then if the Father can be joyous he is—what? Remember, too, that the Supreme Being is unchangeable. If, therefore, he is for one moment made wretched by the irremediable loss of any of his offspring, that wretchedness never had beginning and can never have an end. The same unchangeableness applies also to his anger. Knowing the conclusion as well as the process of all things from their very incipency, there is no more reason why divine Omniscience should be wrathful a single instant, than there is that he should have been so always, and is always so to remain. Such a Deity would be the curse of the universe, from whose terrible doom nor men nor angels could ever escape.

Let no one say, that, after all, it matters very little what we think of God, so that we make our conduct what it should be. Right thinking, right loving and right living stand or fall together. Aurelius painted the portraits of many ladies, but close observers could discover in each face some resemblance to her whom the artist loved and to whom he had given his heart. Our belief concerning God will thus manifest itself in our life's work. "Show me the man you honor," says Carlyle, "I know by that symptom better than by any other what kind of a man you yourself are." And he might just as well have said, show me the God you honor, and your own condition may be equally well determined.



The "scheme of salvation," on which self-denominated evangelical churches lay so much stress, is defective in this, that it not only does not save all of mankind, but that it does not even propose to save all. One cannot listen to the pious laudations that are heaped upon it by millions of prayers and sermons, without being reminded of the French surgeon, who, in speaking of six hundred patients on whom he had operated, was asked by an Englishman how many he had saved: "Ah, monsieur," said he, "I lose them all, but *ze operation* was very brilliant." A threshing machine might be very elaborately and ingeniously constructed, but if, when it had finished its work, a large quantity of wheat still remained in the straw, the machine would be condemned. It may be argued that lost sinners represent nothing but straw, but this position cannot, for one moment, be sustained. Every soul has some share of good, some few grains of wheat mixed with the abundant chaff.

There recently came a pathetic story from Ohio: Two children were kidnapped by gypsies. Their agonized father employed a detective and began the pursuit. During many months he followed the abductors from state to state. One day he entered a gypsy camp at Covington, Tenn., and almost the first person he saw was his little son gathering fire-wood. As soon as the boy saw his father, he dropped everything, and, with a cry of joy, ran to the outstretched arms. But the girl was not there; she had been taken to another and more distant camp. Thither the father hastened, where he found his daughter, but, alas, how changed! Her captors had done everything in their power to destroy her identity. They had darkened her skin, dyed her hair, clothed her in rags, and branded an ugly scar upon her neck. But it was of no avail. Parent and child immediately recog-

nized each other, and in spite of the most violent opposition on the part of the kidnappers, the little one was safely returned to her happy home. Let these gypsies symbolize the spirit of worldliness. How it stains and disfigures every soul which it captures. With what rags it clothes, with what scars it brands, with what tyranny it rules its wretched slave ! Nevertheless, some day, the Father of that soul will appear and demand his own. He cannot be deceived, he will not be thwarted. Beneath dirt, tatters, discoloration and disfiguration, the divine child will be seen and known. Parent and offspring will be re-united in joyful embrace, while home and heaven will be one and the same.

God's final victory will be the most glorious and most complete thing in the universe. Men will not be pulled or driven into the kingdom of holiness. There will be no slaves in paradise, but the hardest and most sinful propensities of human nature will be melted and remoulded in the full blaze of divine love. I well remember the day when we marched into fallen Vicksburg, where a large Confederate army was captured. Yet, it was not capture ! Prisoners are not captured simply because compelled by a superior force to lay down their arms. The real victory over the rebels came afterwards, when we began to feed their famishing, and to administer restoratives to their sick. They had not expected this. Their hearts were touched. Their eyes filled with tears ; while many of them declared that they would never renew hostilities against the federal government. This is the philosophy of salvation. Not man's *power* to do evil, but his *disposition* to do evil must be overcome, ere he can have any part in the heavenly life.

Another thing which I well remember is this: At the close of the war, when I started for home, I left all

my military accoutrements behind. I was to begin a new kind of life in which none of these things would be needed. Thus, at death, I expect a like change will be made. The trappings of materialism, the weapons of corporeal warfare, the ugly instruments of fleshhood, can have no place in a purely spiritual existence. The dying Saint Paul was conscious that he had fought a good fight; he was equally certain that his fighting was finished. Some of us have fought a pretty bad fight, but whether good or bad, death will close the battle scene and we shall enter upon a career of peace. All future triumphs must be brought to us by the white winged messenger. Victories will still await our aspiring souls, and perfection will still be unattained, but, thank the Good Father, we shall have no more conflicts with blood and iron. This, too, is the philosophy of salvation. The soul, for the first time, can be gotten at. It will be like a struggling plant, which had been covered over with wood or stone. The obstruction removed, the plant shoots into the sunlight, offering to smiling heaven a thank-token of bloom and fruit.

"Bastard wheat, or tares," says Dr. Adam Clarke, "may become good wheat by being transplanted to a better soil." He may not know it, but he is herein giving us the very argument which supports the hope of universal salvation.

The black and red pines of Japan are colored according to the soil where they grow. In clean, sandy ground they are red, while in black ground trees of the same kind are black. This, too, is the philosophy of salvation. When transplanted from the present world to another, we shall find ourselves more favorably situated, both as to soil and climate. We shall partake of the purity which surrounds us. Here is our winter; there will be our summer.

"Here is the sorrow, the sighing,  
     Here is the cloud and the night,  
 Here is the sickness, the dying,  
     There are the life and the light.  
 Here is the fading, the wasting,  
     The foe that so watchfully waits,  
 There are the hills everlasting,  
     The city with beautiful gates."

When a meteor strikes earth's atmosphere it is colder than a block of ice, but the next moment it is all ablaze—changed in the twinkling of an eye. This, too, is the philosophy of salvation. When a soul departs from the wintry regions of sin and enters the life-giving atmosphere of true spirituality, may not the change it undergoes be exceedingly great? Will not death introduce us to surroundings that shall be favorable to the welfare of the soul? To think otherwise is to impugn the love, wisdom and power of God.

Moore says:

"Like the stained web that whitens in the sun,  
     Grow pure by being purely shone upon."

This, too, is the philosophy of salvation. If the countenance of the Most High, the face of eternal truth, and the glorified appearance of the saints, are not to shine upon a darkened soul and produce some beneficent effect, what is the meaning of the "power of good influences?"

How shall we interpret the conversion of the "chief of sinners," Saul of Tarsus? It has been called miraculous: it proved to be an irresistible influence of some sort. Was such influence, whatever its origin or nature, entirely exhausted on that occasion? In God's own chosen time, may it not come to each and all? To judge otherwise is to regard Jehovah as being miraculously partial in the treatment of his children.

To keep one burning forever, as though he were a



candle, and yet to prevent forever the fuel from being exhausted, is the miracle in which self-denominated evangelical Christians have been heartily believing. Is it not a little singular that God should be expected to perform this miracle in behalf of *damnation*, when, if an equally great miracle were wrought in behalf of *salvation*, the time would come when there would be nobody left to damn?

“ ‘Tis not so stated in the bond!’ old Shylock spoke,  
“And hence my foe shall never mercy find;”  
“ ‘Tis not so stated in the creed!’ say simple folk,  
“And hence salvation’s not for all mankind.”

In the great struggle for existence, the fittest will finally survive. Shall it be good or evil? What is the fittest thing to completely triumph in this universe, considering who owns it? Sin flourishes today, carries many outposts, but who is in command of the citadel?

Think of a billion human beings, and billions of other creatures, constantly polluting the air with their foul breath; while, during every moment of day and night, there arises from each street and alley and from all the land, great volumes of poisonous vapors, ever flowing currents of deleterious gas, disease-laden fumes, and death-bearing emanations. Yet, somehow, the atmosphere returns to us from sea and mountain, freighted with purity, power and life; for the God of nature has converted that which was vile into that which is wholesome. This, too, is the philosophy of salvation.

There was once a proverb which ran thus: “It is better to be Herod’s hog than Herod’s son.” If ever a human being is doomed to never-ceasing woe, he can truly say,—and how strange it will sound,—It were better to have been God’s vilest brute than to have been his own offspring.



We do not forget the powers of evil. They have had thousands of years' experience in leading men downward. Today an infant soul comes into the world only to meet this mighty army. What an unequal contest! The child would eat of the Tree of Life,—rich, holy, abundant life,—but before it are placed cherubim—hydra-headed monsters—with flaming swords, guarding every passage to the heavenly fruit. What can the infant do against such opposition? It can grow. This is the whole story. This, too, is the philosophy of salvation.

At the breaking out of the Rebellion, we suffered a Bull Run defeat. But those laugh best who laugh last. The difference between the North and the South was the difference between potentialities. The South was at its best at the outset; whereas, the North could call for "three hundred thousand more," and yet again and again repeat the call. Thus the immortal soul falls before its innumerable foes to rise again. Of Angels in Heaven it can call for three hundred thousand more, while the powers of sin have no unlimited source from which to replete their ranks. Man has infinite reserves—God, Christ, and the eternal verities. Thus, Faith clearly foresees, and Christianity plainly foretells, what the end shall be.

Christian friends, the series of discourses on Latest Interpretations reaches its conclusion. That you have followed me so attentively is evidence of your earnest interest in the themes discussed. May your enthusiasm respecting them never cease. They are worthy of your persistent thought and prayerful devotion. Briefly to recapitulate:—

I believe that RATIONALISM is the only solid foundation for faith, hope and conviction; that God the Father is infinite in the wisdom which governs, the love which

blesSES, and the power which saves; that EVIL is finite, both as to its power and duration; that CHRIST is the Son of God, and that, as such, he is also our divine brother; that spiritualized CHRISTIANITY is an all-sufficient religion; that SELFHOOD is never entirely depraved; that BROTHERHOOD involves the certainty of universal salvation; that CONSOLATION should be affectionately administered by the church to all who are in any trouble, whether they be saints who sin, or sinners by name; that IMMORTALITY should be taught in such a manner that no one could wish it to be untrue, or deem it unreasonable; that PROGRESSION is our present duty and will be our eternal privilege; that direct REVELATION greatly aided the authors of the Bible, and that it is possible to all men, since God is everywhere accessible; that MIRACLES, as commonly defined, are unworthy of the confidence they have received and absolutely incapable of elevating the human mind to a true conception of the moral universe; and that a complete VICTORY is positively assured, when every soul in Creation shall have received full and just punishment for its entire wickedness, and when God, with all which that sacred name implies, shall be all in all. Amen.



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